Government

BUSINESS PLAN

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2004-2005

Province of Nova Scotia

Message from Premier John Hamm

I am pleased to present Nova Scotia's *Government Business Plan* for the fiscal year 2004–2005.

We remain strongly committed to our vision of a healthy, prosperous, and self-sufficient Nova Scotia, as articulated in our government blueprint and our corporate plan. The *Government Business Plan* shows how we will be translating those words into action in 2004–2005.

There is no doubt that it has been a challenge this year to find the money for all the programs and services Nova Scotians want and need. Healthcare costs have increased significantly once again here in Nova Scotia, as they have for governments across Canada. We believe that the Government of Canada has an obligation to contribute its fair share of these rising costs, and it is disappointing that they have failed to do so.

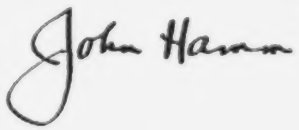
Despite this, we have to move on and make the right choices for Nova Scotians. Not only are we continuing to make increased investments in healthcare services, but we are making a serious and defined commitment to health promotion, which, we believe, will lead to healthier Nova Scotians in the next generation.

We are making strategic investments in social services that provide crucial support to individuals and families. We are maintaining funding to our education system and we are making significant investments in the infrastructure that supports our economy: schools, roads and hospitals.

We have also made a deliberate choice to continue to build a strong public service. Thousands of dedicated employees are responsible for planning and delivering the programs and services that Nova Scotians rely on. We must see human resources as an investment in the quality, reliability, and cost-efficiency of those services.

The choices we have had to make this year have not been easy. We have had to find additional revenues from a number of sources to pay for these priorities. However, we believe these are necessary investments that will contribute to Nova Scotia's growth and prosperity—now and in the future.

We look forward to working with Nova Scotians in 2004–2005 to achieve their goals and continue to make Nova Scotia one of the best places in Canada to live, work, and raise a family.



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Government
BUSINESS PLAN
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2004-2005

The Government Business Plan

Vision

A healthy, prosperous, and self-sufficient Nova Scotia.

Introduction

The Government of Nova Scotia's 2004–2005 business plan is designed to advance the vision of a healthy, prosperous, and self-sufficient Nova Scotia.

The government's corporate priorities, based on the *Blueprint for Building a Better Nova Scotia*, focus on building greater prosperity, while maintaining fiscal responsibility and accountability.

They include plans to provide better, faster health care to Nova Scotians who need it, while promoting good health habits and preventing injuries so everyone will have long and productive lives.

Investments in education and learning priorities will promote success, not only for children in our education system but also for adults who are retraining to meet the needs of the changing workforce.

The government also recognizes the need to address the priorities that Nova Scotians value—seniors, families and Nova Scotians in need, environment, cultural diversity, consumer protection/insurance, and safer communities/streets.

The *Government Business Plan* identifies how government will work with Nova Scotians, organizations, and communities to implement these priorities and achieve these goals in 2004–2005. Results of these activities will be reported in the annual *Accountability Report* at the end of the fiscal year.

Nova Scotia's Planning Context 2004–2005

Demographic Context

Nova Scotia's population continues to get older and more urban. Statistics Canada forecasts that the percentage of Nova Scotians under 20 years of age will fall from 23.4 per cent in 2004 to 17.8 per cent in 2026, while the percentage of the population 65 years of age and older will increase from 13.8 per cent in 2004 to 24.5 per cent in 2026. The increasing percentage of seniors, especially in the rural areas of Nova Scotia, is compounded by the out-migration of the younger, educated population and lower fertility rates.

In counties within commuting distance of the Halifax Regional Municipality the population has increased, and unemployment rates and average income are comparable to those in Halifax County, which in turn is similar to the Canadian figures. However, in most rural counties beyond commuting distance, and in industrial Cape Breton, the population has declined, especially in the younger age groups.

Nova Scotia's population growth has been significantly less than Canada's as a whole. From 1994 to 2003, population grew 9.1 per cent in Canada and 1.0 per cent in Nova Scotia. During the previous 10-year period—from 1984 to 1993—population grew 12.0 per cent in Canada and 5.3 per cent in Nova Scotia. As a result, the province's share of the Canadian population has declined from 3.4 per cent in 1984 to 3.0 per cent in 2003.

In 1995–1996, Nova Scotia received 3,397 immigrants, while in 2002–2003 the number declined 62.9 per cent to 1,259 immigrants. Although Nova Scotia has always received less than its proportionate share of immigrants, the immigration share continues to decline. Nova Scotia has gone from receiving 1.6 per cent in 1995–1996 to 0.6 per cent in 2002–2003 of the national total immigrants. In addition, many immigrants do not stay in Nova Scotia but migrate to the major immigration centres of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.

The aging population puts increasing pressure on publicly insured health services, in particular on home care, long-term care, pharmaceuticals, and health promotion activities. As well, the drop in the number of children is causing public school enrolments to go down, particularly in rural schools.

Health Context

Nova Scotians expect high-quality health care and services. They want competent practitioners, minimal wait times, and medical procedures that are known to produce good outcomes.

As these demands increase, so does the cost of healthcare services in Nova Scotia and across Canada. Nova Scotia's expenditures in this area have increased by some $1 billion since 1992–1993, with the largest increases in spending on hospitals, long-term care facilities, and physicians.

Federal funding transfers for health care have not kept pace with the rising costs. Since the introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer in 1996–99, federal support for health care, social services, and post-secondary education has fallen dramatically. Currently, the federal government transfers about 16 cents for every dollar of provincial expenditure on these programs

The health care system is a major employer in Nova Scotians, accounting for some 30,000 full-time equivalent positions. Health care is a labour-intensive service and is sensitive to fluctuations and cost pressures associated with the labour market and health professional workforce. Highly competitive labour markets will drive further increases in wages and other incentives.

Health Promotion Context

Nova Scotians, on average, are not as healthy as other Canadians, and the province has an above-average incidence of chronic diseases.

Studies show that some 20.8 per cent of Nova Scotians are obese, compared to 14.9 per cent for Canada, putting Nova Scotians at risk for many chronic diseases and other health complications. The number of overweight children has tripled in the last 10–15 years and is rapidly getting worse.

Also, more than 1,600 Nova Scotians die each year from smoking-related illness, and 200 more die from exposure to second-hand smoke. The estimated cost to treat smoking-related illness in Nova Scotia is $170 million annually.

The Government of Nova Scotia is making increased investments in health promotion programs that will help prevent diseases and allow Nova Scotians to live healthier lives.

Our Economic Context

Nova Scotia's economy is performing on par with the Canadian economy at more than 3 per cent real economic growth on average over the last five years. Domestic demand and offshore energy exploration have helped the Nova Scotia economy avoid the brunt of the impact from slow economic growth experienced by its major trading partner, the United States, in 2002.

Overall, the province realized a net gain of 7,000 jobs in 2003, compared to 5,100 in 2002. Since July 1999, more than 33,000 new jobs have been created. The total number of employed Nova Scotians for the month of March 2004 hit 442,700—an all-time high for the province.

Personal (household) sector and construction sector investment continued to provide the main sources of GDP and employment growth in 2003. Consumer spending edged up 3.2 per cent, and residential construction investment advanced 11.7 per cent.

Nova Scotia relies heavily on the United States for its export markets, and despite a less-favourable exchange rate, Nova Scotia's exports and manufacturing shipments continued to grow last year, helped in part by strong commodity prices.

With emerging economies like China gaining momentum, Nova Scotia must ensure that it does not lose export market share in the United States, while gaining a strong foothold in other export markets.

Nova Scotia trails almost every other province in its exports as a percentage of GDP. Government is planning strategies in 2004–2005 to boost Nova Scotia's export potential.

Tourism offers a major opportunity to promote growth and economic prosperity, particularly in rural areas. Like exports, tourism has the potential to attract spending from outside Nova Scotia.

Tourism receipts increased to almost $1.3 billion in 2003, with potential for continued growth over the coming years.

Continued productivity improvements and job creation are needed to further enhance Nova Scotia's economy.

Government will need to make strategic investments in public infrastructure and innovation. As well, investments in education and training for Nova Scotians of all ages will be essential to long-term economic development.

Financial Context

Nova Scotia's net direct debt, as of March 31, 2003, was $12.2 billion. Nova Scotia's ratio of debt per person is still among the highest in the country. This is why the Government of Nova Scotia continues to pursue a balanced budget as a high priority in 2004–2005 and to move forward with its long-term debt reduction plan. Funds have been set aside for debt reduction, and the government will make its first deposit into the Debt Retirement Fund.

The government will contain spending in a number of areas this year, but overall spending will increase some 5 per cent to address priority investments such as health, social services, and education.

The Government of Nova Scotia introduced tax reductions that took effect January 1, 2004. In addition, a one-time payment was made to taxpayers (the Nova Scotia Taxpayer Refund) in 2003 to ensure that tax dollars were returned as soon as possible.

While competitive taxation is important for economic growth, governments must manage this process against increasing demands and real cost increases in essential government services such as health care, along with reduced or inadequate funding from federal sources.

More tax changes are proposed in 2004–2005 to ensure that the province has sufficient revenues to meet its priorities without returning to a deficit position. Some tax relief will remain for 96 per cent of Nova Scotia taxpayers.

The government will also improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized businesses by matching federal changes to the small business deduction threshold.

Social and Environmental Context

Nova Scotia's experience with adverse weather conditions in 2003–2004, as well as the threat of public health problems, highlighted the importance of preparing for emergencies and promoting the highest quality public health standards.

The province is still recovering from the devastation of severe flooding in spring 2003, Hurricane Juan in September 2003, and a major winter storm in early 2004.

Nova Scotia's forests and parks will need considerable attention this year. The weather has also been hard on Nova Scotia's agriculture sector, already dealing with international problems in the beef and chicken industries.

Public health issues such as SARS and the mosquito-borne West Nile virus have also caused concern.

The Government of Nova Scotia will make additional investments in emergency preparedness and public health prevention this year. This money will be used to develop proactive emergency prevention programs and will contribute to improving our disaster recovery ability.

Government of Nova Scotia—Corporate Priorities 2004–2005

- Health care
- Learning is succeeding
- Building greater prosperity
- Fiscal responsibility and accountability
- Protecting what Nova Scotians value
  - Seniors
  - Families and Nova Scotians in need
  - Environment
  - Cultural diversity
  - Safer communities/streets
  - Consumer protection/insurance

Government of Nova Scotia—Core Business Areas

The Government Business Plan is grouped around six core business areas:

1. Health and Health Care
2. Education and Learning
3. The Economy
4. Families and Communities
5. The Environment
6. Government Services

Core business areas are the fundamental roles, functions, and services that Nova Scotians expect government to provide every year. They support the core policy objectives of government.

In each of these core business areas there are specific priorities that are linked to the corporate priorities and vision of the Government of Nova Scotia. These are described in the sections that follow.

1. Health and Health Care

The Government of Nova Scotia is making health and health care the top priority once again in 2004–2005. The goal is not only to provide better, faster healthcare services, but to assist Nova Scotians in their ongoing efforts to stay healthy and avoid illness and injury.

Government will increase its investment in health care and health promotion by some $230 million to $2.3 billion. This will be accomplished despite the fact that the Government of Canada has failed to commit sufficient funding in this fiscal year to cover the growing healthcare needs of Nova Scotians and other Canadians.

Government will proceed in 2004–2005 with implementation of its 2003 health plan, *Your Health Matters*. This plan focuses on providing Nova Scotians with better access to quality health care; reducing unreasonably long wait times; and promoting life-style choices that contribute to health, physical activity, and well-being.

An additional $3.6 million will be spent this year on specific activities to promote the long-term health and well-being of Nova Scotians. The Office of Health Promotion will work with a wide range of health and community organizations across the province to give Nova Scotians the tools and encouragement they need to make healthy lifestyle choices, now and in the future.

Government continues to make progress in attracting and keeping qualified health service providers at all levels. The 2004–2005 budget will provide for wage and salary increases for family physicians, specialists, nurses, paramedics, and other healthcare workers. Recruiting and then retaining healthcare workers helps ensure that Nova Scotians have access to services, when and where they need them.

There are also special measures this year to improve the quality of life for Nova Scotia's seniors. Additional funds will be available to help many seniors bear the financial burden of long-term care. Government has made a significant new investment in Pharmacare to cover the rapidly rising costs of prescription drugs. And government will work to help seniors avoid common injuries such as falls.

Government is also making a number of targeted health investments to ensure that Nova Scotia is better equipped to deal with modern public health hazards such as SARS, West Nile virus, pandemic flu, and terrorism-related events. The Department of Health has begun an Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response Initiative for the Nova Scotia health system and will add to the staff complement in its public health section.

Health and Health Care Priorities 2004–2005

Wellness and Health Promotion

Priority: Promoting Physical Activity

Government will continue to expand programs to encourage Nova Scotia's children and their families to be more physically active with new investment of some $500,000 in 2004–2005.

The Active Kids/Healthy Kids strategy will continue with measures such as

- more funding for sport and recreation organizations, municipalities, and community groups
- training of youth fitness leaders and physical activity counsellors
- continued financial support of the Active School Community pilot projects
- support for an active transportation framework for Nova Scotia to increase activities such as walking and cycling

Government will work to enhance the quality of sport and recreation programs across the province through training for coaches, outdoor leaders, lifeguards, and fitness instructors and monitoring through programs such as Fair Play, Sport Futures, and High 5.

Government will provide $330,000 in funding to Sport Nova Scotia's Kidsport program, so more children in low-income families will get financial assistance to cover the high cost of recreation and sport programs. Government will also host a conference in 2004 to examine ways to address the financial and other barriers that prevent Nova Scotians from participating in physical activity, sport, and recreation.

Government will prepare for a second Physically Active Children and Youth (PACY) research study in 2005. This follows the first study in 2001, which established baseline data for physical activity levels among children and youth in Nova Scotia. (Office of Health Promotion, Education)

Priority: Promoting Healthy Eating

Government will work with school boards and many other partners in 2004–2005 to develop a provincial school food and nutrition policy. This will include guidelines for healthier choices in vending machines and on school menus, as well as tools for parents to help their children eat a balanced diet.

Government will collaborate with the Nova Scotia Alliance for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity to complete the draft provincial healthy eating strategy and support the development of an implementation plan.

Breastfeeding is the best method of infant feeding. Government and district health authorities (DHAs) will continue to implement policies to encourage breastfeeding and support related education for employees of health organizations.

The cost of a healthy diet can be a barrier for Nova Scotian families who are trying to eat well. Working with partners and stakeholder organizations, Government will study this issue in 2004–2005 to identify ways to help Nova Scotian families overcome this barrier. (Office of Health Promotion, Education)

Priority: Preventing Injuries

Government will continue efforts in 2004–2005 to reduce the number of preventable injuries among Nova Scotians. The Nova Scotia Injury Prevention Strategy puts particular focus on the areas that cause the greatest number of injury-related deaths and hospitalizations and account for the largest portion of the economic burden of injury:

- falls among seniors
- transportation-related injuries
- suicide

The strategy recognizes existing injury prevention programs and initiatives and promotes injury prevention at the community level. Government will also further develop a framework for collection, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of injury-related data that will inform future injury prevention priorities and initiatives.

Government continues to improve outcomes for injured persons through better emergency response, acute care and rehabilitation services, and community supports. (Office of Health Promotion)

Priority: Promoting Healthy Sexuality

Nova Scotia youth say they want to make informed and good decisions about their sexual health. They also want equitable, confidential, and timely access to sexual health education, information, services, and supports.

Sex?—a sexual health education resource for youth—is designed to support youth in making healthy and informed decisions. It will be distributed this year through local planning with youth, community partners, public health, and schools.

The Roundtable on Youth Sexual Health—a consortium already in place—has identified the key elements of a strategy to promote youth sexual health: leadership, community awareness and supports, and services for youth, parents, and professionals The roundtable will further develop the strategy in 2004–2005, along with an action plan and evaluation framework. (Office of Health Promotion)

Priority: Tobacco Strategy Implementation

Government will continue implementation of the Nova Scotia tobacco strategy in 2004–2005. Programs and services will be expanded to align with new research and best practices. This will complement legislation, smoking cessation programs, and ongoing work of nicotine treatment staff and tobacco coordinators.

- A new workplace program will be implemented to help employers provide effective smoke-free policies and help their employees quit smoking.
- The Department of Education will develop a high school curriculum resource called *You Choose– Media Literacy*, which involves looking at anti-smoking advertisements in the context of the media's influence on personal behaviour. The *Smoke Free for Life Program* curriculum will continue in grades primary to 9, along with the *No More Butts* smoking cessation program for high school students.
- Government will also release the first tobacco report card to update the public on the progress of the tobacco strategy. (Office of Health Promotion, Education)

Priority: Addiction Prevention

Government will work to prevent and reduce problems associated with substance use and gambling in 2004–2005.

Alcohol plays a significant role in injury, risky sexual behaviour, and chronic diseases, such as heart or liver disease. It is also a factor in crime, violence, and other social problems. Over the next three years, the Office of Health Promotion will coordinate the development of a province-wide problem drinking strategy.

Government will work with health providers and DHAs to raise awareness of safe drinking guidelines and provide more support through Addiction Services so that people who experience problems can seek help earlier.

Addiction prevention efforts also include developing drug prevention curriculum supplements for schools and contributing to government-wide policy and programs to prevent and address problem gambling.

Government will develop a problem gambling strategy, with service standards, program coordination, and public education on the risks and consequences of problem gambling. The strategy will ensure that appropriate services are available for problem gamblers and their families. (Office of Health Promotion)

Priority: Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

Government will work with a wide variety of partners on strategies to prevent and manage chronic diseases such as arthritis, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases,

diabetes, cancer, and Alzheimer's. The Office of Health Promotion and the Department of Health will build on work begun at Dalhousie University with a broad range of stakeholders.

- An advisory committee will provide advice on issues related to health promotion and chronic disease prevention
- In collaboration with DHAs, funding will go community health boards to support community capacity-building aimed at preventing chronic disease. Targeted areas will include healthy eating, tobacco control and physical activity.
- In collaboration with researchers, institutions, and agencies, research will be supported to addresses gaps in knowledge of chronic disease and underlying determinants.
- Strategies will be used to promote the best possible management of chronic diseases for those who have them. This may involve information and advice for patients in primary care settings, better use of medications, and information systems to track progress. (Office of Health Promotion, Health)

Priority: Communications and Social Marketing

The Office of Health Promotion will work with its partners on health promotion activities that will educate and inform Nova Scotians, particularly those who are least healthy, about health status, risks to health, and how to lead healthier lifestyles.

Research shows that the most effective health promotion programs use social marketing as part of the mix of strategies and tactics. Media and other communications tools are used as part of a comprehensive health promotion campaign that include enacting healthy public policy, supporting community action, and creating healthy physical environments.

Scientific approaches to social marketing, health education, and consumer research will be applied to health promotion initiatives—from simple brochures to comprehensive media campaigns.

A strong "healthy Nova Scotia" brand will be built to capture the attention of Nova Scotians and inspire and motivate them to improve their health. The brand will focus and guide provincial health promotion campaigns and can be used by all partners to demonstrate shared goals and initiatives. (Office of Health Promotion)

Priority: Wellness for Government Employees

Government will develop programs to help government employees improve their health and physical activity levels. This will start with a full needs assessment for employees. The Office of Health Promotion will be

working closely with the Public Service Commission to link the wellness initiative with other province-wide programs. (Office of Health Promotion, Public Service Commission)

Healthcare Services

Priority: Front-line Health Care

The Government of Nova Scotia will increase funding to district health authorities by $79 million in 2004–2005, bringing total funding for DHAs to $1,108 million.

The funding will enable the districts to operate the hospitals, clinics, and services that Nova Scotians need to get well and stay healthy. Patients will get high-quality health care and shorter wait times for many tests and treatments.

The new funding includes a 7 per cent increase in non-salary funding for hospitals and other services, part of an ongoing commitment by government to stabilize healthcare funding. It also includes covers the cost of negotiated salary increases to ensure that staff are compensated fairly for the work they do.

In addition, the $79 million additional funding will address some specific program needs, including

- expansion of the high-volume emergency room at the QEII Health Sciences Centre.
- development work for a children's rehabilitation program at the IWK Children's Hospital
- expanded dialysis and MRI services in the Capital and Cape Breton District Health Authorities

Priority: Reducing Wait Times

The Government of Nova Scotia has made considerable progress in the last two years in reducing the amount of time Nova Scotians have to wait for key services and diagnostic tests. Wait times have decreased for cardiac diagnostic services, MRI exams, and bone densitometry, for example.

Government will continue efforts in 2004–2005 to monitor and identify ways to reduce wait times.

A committee of doctors, radiologists, healthcare professionals, and Department of Health staff was formed in 2003 to examine wait time issues. They looked at wait times for

- surgical services (beginning with orthopedics)
- diagnostics (beginning with MRI/CT and genetic testing)
- referrals from family doctor to specialists (beginning with gastroenterology, plastic surgery, and medical oncology).

A Wait Time Monitoring Advisory Committee has been set up to further advance this work in 2004–2005 through

- development of an approach to collecting standard wait-time information for a range of healthcare services
- publishing wait-time information so that Nova Scotians can make informed choices about their health care
- work to address the bottlenecks so that wait times are shortened

Priority: Recruiting and Keeping Health Workers

Government is moving forward in 2004–2005 with strategies to ensure that healthcare workers are in place to care for Nova Scotians in the years ahead, as more and more workers approach retirement age. Strategies include developing new ways of delivering health services and new relationships between health professionals.

A new Chief Health Human Resource officer will build upon work under way through Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy, ongoing physician recruitment efforts, the provincial physician resource planning initiative, and several other training and recruitment initiatives for other health professionals.

Health human resource planning includes strategies around the recruitment and retention of healthcare providers, the supply of healthcare professionals, and the distribution of healthcare workers through the province and among urban, rural, and remote areas.

In 2004–2005, Nova Scotia will continue to fund a joint initiative between the New Brunswick Community College and Nova Scotia Community College to train a further 25 medical laboratory technologists. Nova Scotia will offer students bursaries of $4,000 in each year of the two-year program of studies, and in exchange, these students will commit to working in the Nova Scotia healthcare system for a two-year period.

The Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy is now in its fourth year, supporting both practising and student nurses, enhancing recruitment efforts and promoting workforce development. Between 2001 and 2006, almost $60 million will be invested to support this, including $7.1 million to educate an additional 240 nurses. In addition, there are now 14 primary health care nurse practitioners in Nova Scotia, compared to 4 in 2000.

Government expects to spend an additional $68.6 million in 2004–2005 on behalf of Nova Scotians who require services from the province's physicians. This will include fee increases under the recently signed physician contract, as well as funding for the Alternative Funding Plans for specific specialty services.

This funding will help with recruitment and retention issues, further enhancing access to physician services for Nova Scotians, particularly in rural areas.

Government will increase funding for Emergency Health Services by $7.4 million in recognition of wage increases for paramedics and other EHS workers. This is expected to help with recruiting and retaining EHS staff.

Priority: Training More Physicians

The Government of Nova Scotia is working to increase the number of physicians available in the future to serve the needs of Nova Scotians.

In 2003–2004, eight new first-year positions were added to the Dalhousie Medical School, and these students are in Year 2 for 2004–2005. Starting in the fall of 2004, government will fund an additional eight new first-year medical students.

Other initiatives for 2004–2005 include a strategic review of ongoing recruitment efforts to maximize their benefits to the province and reducing barriers to medical practice for international medical school graduates.

Priority: Primary Health Care Renewal

Primary Health Care Renewal is about positively influencing the many factors that affect health. It includes a team approach to health and healthcare delivery, all-day access to essential health services, care for people of all ages and cultures in their communities, and appropriate use of technology.

The Primary Health Care Transition Fund continues to support district health authorities as they develop and implement primary health care services.

Major priorities include the creation of new ways to develop sustainable primary health care networks, increasing the number of community-based primary health organizations, and moving the primary health care system to an electronic patient record.

The Nova Scotia Department of Health, through the Diversity and Social Inclusion Initiative, has developed a three-year plan to promote policies and guidelines for the primary health care system. This includes

- partnerships and workshops in communities across the province
- developing public websites
- working with First Nation, African Canadian, immigrant, and francophone communities.

A French-language health services coordinator was hired by the Department of Health to lay the groundwork for responding to language, cultural, and specific health needs of all Nova Scotians. (Health)

Priority: Enhanced Cardiac Care

Cardiovascular disease is one of the most common causes of death in Nova Scotia. It contributes directly to disability, work loss, and premature death. Government is working with a broad range of stakeholders across the province (Cardiac Advisory Council) to develop a strategic plan and actions to improve the cardiac health of Nova Scotians.

The $5 million provided in 2003–2004 to enhance cardiac care in Nova Scotia will continue. This funding will support the Capital District Health Authority's plan to add equipment, staff, and other resources to give patients faster access to cardiac tests and surgeries.

Wait times have improved for cardiac care. In December 2002, people needing elective cardiovascular surgery waited 43 weeks. In December 2003, they waited 9 weeks. (Health)

Priority: Enhancing Emergency Health Preparedness

The Department of Health has initiated an Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response Initiative for the Nova Scotia Health System. This purpose is to develop a response plan for "all hazards"—SARS, West Nile Virus, pandemic flu, and terrorist-associated chemical, radio-nuclear, or biological events.

The plan's components will include surveillance, communication, public health measures, and health and emergency services. It will be consistent with the National Health Emergency Management Framework.

A Strategic Planning and Policy Committee has been established with a mandate to lead and oversee the development of a comprehensive, integrated, functional, and robust emergency planning, preparedness, and response capability for the Nova Scotia health system. Participants include the DHAs, Department of Community Services, and several branches of the Department of Health.

Government will also make some specific new investments in Nova Scotia's public health office to ensure the province has the capacity to prevent public health problems and respond to a crisis should it occur. This will include a new epidemiologist and another Medical Officer of Health. (Health)

Priority: Improving Mental Health Services

In 2003, government released its strategic direction for mental health and provided $2 million in funding to DHAs and the IWK Health Centre to implement core service standards in key areas of community supports, crisis services, and child and youth services.

During 2004–2005, the Department of Health will work with teams of mental health clinicians and consumers to continue the implementation of core service standards and to begin the implementation of speciality service standards for eating disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, and services to seniors.

In addition, a plan for monitoring the quality, appropriateness, and effectiveness of mental health services will be initiated. Pilot testing of standardized outcome and satisfaction measures will enable a uniform approach to evaluating treatment effectiveness and client satisfaction of mental health services. (Health)

Priority: Children's Mental Health

New community-based mental health treatment teams have been established at the Cape Breton DHA and at the IWK Health Centre to serve children and youth. The teams provide intensive case-management services to children and youth up to their 19th birthdays. Services are more intensive than regular outpatient but less intensive than inpatient services.

A new 12-bed Adolescent Centre for Treatment (ACT) opened as a part of the IWK Mental Health Program in January 2004. ACT provides a longer-term treatment than the acute psychiatric inpatient unit, with an average length of stay of 12 months. Clients are youth between 12 and 19 years with severe and persistent mental illness and/or severe behaviour disorders.

The 50 DHA-operated mental health clinics provide services to children and youth and access specialized mental health services at the IWK Health Centre as needed. (Health)

Improved Services to Seniors

Priority: Reducing Nursing Home Costs for Seniors

Nova Scotia is the first Atlantic province to develop a plan to fully cover senior's healthcare costs in nursing homes. About 80 per cent of seniors have their nursing home healthcare costs subsidized by the government. This plan benefits the remaining 20 per cent.

The government announced in the spring of 2003 its Five Point Plan to cover the health care costs for nursing home residents. This plan involved phasing in reductions for seniors beginning in 2003–2004, with the Department of Health fully covering the costs of health care by April 1, 2007. Government will now fully implement this initiative on January 1, 2005.

This new funding model will be applied to residents of all long-term care facilities under the Department of Health's mandate, including nursing homes, residential care facilities, and community-based options.

Effective January 1, 2005, individuals applying for long-term care placement will participate in a streamlined, less-intrusive financial assessment process that will consider only income. Assets will no longer be considered, thus eliminating the two-year look-back. Current residents will have a financial reassessment completed, which will consider only their income. (Health)

Priority: Affordable Drugs

Government is working to keep drugs affordable for the 94,000 seniors insured through the provincial Pharmacare program by investing an additional $12 million and keeping our program as the most comprehensive in Atlantic Canada.

Despite an increase in annual premiums (from $336 to $390), seniors continue to pay 33 per cent of total prescription costs to an annual maximum of $350. Low-income seniors are exempt from the premiums.

More than half of seniors in program will see no increase in the cost of their drug coverage this year because of the new reductions and exemptions. Government contributes 74 per cent of the costs associated with the Pharmacare program, with seniors contributing the remaining 26 per cent through co-payments and premiums. (Health)

Priority: Task Force on Aging

Government will form a task force on aging to study the unique needs of seniors today and in future. The task force will develop recommendations on health and social programming for seniors. This is a multi-year initiative.

In 2004–2005, the task force steering committee will be formed; research will be started; and public consultations will be held. A summary report will be prepared with analysis of the results, along with a strategy for positive aging. (Senior Citizens' Secretariat)

Health System Management

Priority: Accountability for Results

In 2004–2005, government will strengthen accountability and reporting on results of the healthcare system. This will include:

- reporting to the federal government on how the provincial healthcare system meets the requirements of the Canada Health Act.
- reporting annually to the public on how and where health funding is being invested (an annual report on *Your Health Matters* will account for how the year's activities matched plans and will report on issues such as quality, access, and efficiency, along with progress in primary or community-based health, home care, and drug coverage)
- reporting on the use of information technology in health care, particularly in rural communities

- more information on wait lists and standards in test and treatment areas

Priority: Renovated Hospitals

Government will proceed with a number of projects in 2004–2005 to improve Nova Scotia's healthcare infrastructure.

The Women's and Children's Unit at South Shore Regional Hospital and the Genetics Lab and the Medical Day Assessment and Treatment Unit at the IWK Health Centre will be completed this year.

The Cape Breton Regional Hospital Renal Dialysis Expansion, which was started last fall, will continue to make progress in 2004–2005.

Projects getting under way in 2004–2005 include

- the Cobequid Community Health Centre
- the Dartmouth General Hospital Renal Dialysis Expansion
- the expansion of the Queen Elizabeth II Emergency Department

Priority: Hospital Information System

A new hospital information system will enable the health records of Nova Scotians to travel with them wherever they access care in the province. A shared electronic record will allow healthcare providers to access a patient's record and enter health history, medications, test results, and other relevant health information.

The hospital information system, which supports the electronic patient records, was implemented in the Guysborough-Antigonish-Strait and Cape Breton District Health Authorities in February 2003. Turnaround times for test results have been reduced by as much as seven days.

The system will be implemented in South Shore District Health Authority in 2004, with full implementation across the province scheduled for winter 2006.

Priority: Medical Equipment—Capital Spending

The department continues to work with the district health authorities to develop priorities for investment in medical equipment across the province.

A number of major equipment purchases will be made in 2004–2005.

The three-year Picture Archiving and Communications (PAC) technology project will continue. This allows medical teams to send images over secure digital networks from hospital to hospital throughout Atlantic Canada, so patients can be diagnosed and treated without travelling. This is a joint project of all four Atlantic provinces. Nova Scotia has committed $4.5 million over three years.

Health—Measuring Our Performance

Measure: **Health Human Resource Positions Filled (Health)**

Outcome: Access to quality health care

This is a measure of the supply and distribution of primary healthcare personnel in under-served areas.

Performance Highlights and Targets

During 2003, 37 of the 44 physician positions were filled in under-served areas (84 per cent) (2002, 29 of 34 positions filled—85 per cent). Nova Scotia's target is to achieve 80 per cent or more through ongoing recruitment efforts that include engaging nurse practitioners and non-physician providers to work along with physicians throughout the healthcare system.

Measure: **Ambulance Response Times (Health)**

Outcome: Access to quality health care

The industry standard for response time is based on chances of survival after a cardiac arrest. Chances of survival improve if an ambulance arrives at an emergency scene in nine minutes or less.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002–2003, ambulances arrived at an emergency scene in nine minutes or less 69 per cent of the time (2001–2002, 67 per cent). In urban or densely populated areas, this percentage improved to 90 per cent. Our target is a response time of nine minutes or less throughout Nova Scotia, from ambulance dispatch to arrival at the emergency scene, 68 per cent of the time.

Measure: **Vaccination Coverage (Flu Shot) (Health)**

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

Vaccination coverage is measured by calculating the percentage of people 65 years and older who had a flu shot in the past year. By increasing the number of people who receive flu shots, we can decrease the burden of illness on vulnerable populations and reduce the strain on the health system at the same time.

Performance Highlights and Targets:

In 2000–2001, 66 per cent of Nova Scotians (65 and older) reported receiving a flu shot according to the biennial Canada Community Health Survey. Immunization against the flu is an important public health intervention. By 2004–2005, we aim to increase the percentage to 80 per cent.

Measure: **Youth Smoking, Ages 15–19 (Office of Health Promotion)**

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death and disability. High rates of smoking translate into high rates of diseases, including lung cancer, emphysema, and heart/respiratory disease, later in life.

Performance Highlights and Targets

The 2002, the Canada Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (Note 1) reported that 20 per cent of Nova Scotia's youth smoked (2001, 27 per cent). This is a significant reduction in student tobacco use. We will work to reduce the percentage of youth who smoke in Nova Scotia through enforcement of the Tobacco Access Act to reduce the sale of tobacco products to minors, increased tobacco prevention education in schools, and support for tobacco-free sports programs.

Note 1: In prior years, youth smoking was measured using the biennial Canada Community Health Survey (CCHS). For 2004–2005 and future years we will use the annual Canada Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, which provides more current and timely information. CCHS data will continue to be reported to national organizations.

Measure: **Physical Activity/Inactivity, Youth (Office of Health Promotion)**

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

Regular physical activity for children and youth provides important health benefits. Inactive children are more likely to become inactive and unhealthy adults. Physical inactivity is measured by calculating the percentage of students in grades 3, 7, and 11 who accumulated at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity on at least five days of the week.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2001, physical activity levels of Nova Scotians children and youth, based on the Physical Activity for Children and Youth Accelerometer survey (Note 2) were as follows

Grade Level	% Physically Active—2001 Boys	% Physically Active—2001 Girls
Grade 3	90%	92%
Grade 7	62%	44%
Grade 11	12%	7%

Our goal is to maintain physical activity levels for grade 3 children and to increase physical activity levels for grade 7 and 11 children by 10 per cent by 2009–2010.

Note 2: In prior years, one measure for physical activity was reported for both youth and adults (population 12 years and older) using CCHS data. For 2004–2005 and future years we will use two measures of physical activity levels—one for youth (grades 3, 7, and 11) and a second for adults (20 years and older). The new measures provide a more comprehensive view of physical activity and allow a focus on youth.

Measure: **Physical Activity/Inactivity, Adults (Office of Health Promotion)**

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

Regular physical activity provides important health benefits for adults; while inactivity is a major risk factor for heart disease and depression for this age group. Physical inactivity is measured by calculating the proportion of the population 20 years and older (note 2) who report being physically active less than once per week or never.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2001, 42 per cent of adult Nova Scotians, 20 years of age or older, reported being inactive according to the Canada Community Health Survey. Our goal is to increase physical activity to 52 per cent by 2009–2010.

Measure: **Body Mass Index (BMI) (Office of Health Promotion)**

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

BMI is a measurement of weight in relation to height for healthy adults aged 20–65. A healthy body weight (for height) is associated with a reduced risk of health problems. A BMI between 20 and 25 is considered the healthy range.

Performance Highlights and Targets:

In 2001, 55.2 per cent of Nova Scotians reported a BMI in excess of the healthy range based on biennial Canada Community Health Survey. Our target is to decrease this percentage over time.

2. Education

Education and lifelong learning are priorities for the Government of Nova Scotia in 2004–2005. Government will work closely with school boards, higher education institutions, and community providers to meet the learning needs of Nova Scotians at all levels.

Government's education plan, *Learning for Life: Planning for Student Success*, continues to guide government's approach to improving education for Nova Scotians from birth to adulthood. The government will increase overall investments in education to continue implementation of this plan.

There will be more funding for Nova Scotia school boards once again this year, continuing an upward trend. This will help government and school boards pursue a number of important priorities, including

- keeping class sizes down for our youngest students
- offering help for struggling readers in grade 1
- implementing ongoing mathematics and literacy strategies
- helping parents and communities contribute to education
- offering academic alternatives to students who can't attend school

Nova Scotia libraries will see a new investment this year as part of government's commitment to education for Nova Scotians outside the formal school system. Improved library services will complement existing adult learning programs through the Skills Agenda and labour market initiatives.

The government will also make capital investments in educational facilities in 2004–2005. Construction of a number of public school facilities is under way, along with expansion of Nova Scotia Community College facilities across the province.

Education Priorities 2004–2005

Priority: Reducing Class Sizes

The Government of Nova Scotia is continuing its program to reduce class sizes for Nova Scotia's youngest public school students, as outlined in *Learning for Life: Planning for Student Success*, released in fall 2002.

The class size cap of 25 students per class was introduced at grade primary during the 2003–2004 school year. This will be extended to include grade 1 for the 2004–2005 school year and grade 2 for the 2005–2006 school year.

Before this initiative there were no provincial class size standards, and class sizes were left to the discretion of school boards and schools. Standards are now in place for grade primary. Smaller class sizes help our youngest public school students get the individual attention and support they need. (Education)

Priority: Literacy Programs

The Government of Nova Scotia will focus on literacy development for young Nova Scotians at all grade levels in 2004–2005.

As part of the Literacy Success Strategy, the early intervention Reading Recovery™ program will be made available to all grade 1 students who need it by September 2005. Reading Recovery is a proven method of helping students who may be lagging in their reading skills for any reason.

The Observation Survey and the Sondage d'observation en lecture-écriture will be administered as part of research with grade 1 French immersion students. This will assist in determining appropriate interventions for French immersion students struggling with reading and writing.

For French immersion students, a classroom resource for assessment of grade 9 French language skills will be field-tested, and an assessment resource for Jeunes lecteurs actifs 4 à 6 will be implemented.

The Active Young Readers P–6/Jeunes lecteurs actifs M à 6 will continue in elementary schools.

The Elementary Literacy Assessment will be administered for the second time to grade 6 students. Individual student results will be provided to parents, and a Student Tracking and Monitoring System will be developed to identify struggling readers and writers and to monitor supports/interventions provided. The department will provide additional funding in 2004–2005 to provide increased support for these struggling students.

A classroom assessment resource for grades 6–8, *Active Readers Assessment Resource for Young Adolescents*, will be introduced. This will give teachers detailed information concerning assessment and instructional approaches, strategies such as reading assessment passages in English language arts and content areas, reading record sheets, and information cards.

Writers in Action/Écrivains à l'oeuvre will be expanded to grade 6, and Active Readers/Lecteurs actifs to grade 9, including the provision of student resources as well as professional development and resources for teachers.

Senior high literacy initiatives will include English 10 Plus pilots; the introduction of *Writers in Action 10: A Teaching Resource* and the development of resources for Écrivains à l'oeuvre 10 et 11; the introduction of *English 10: A Reading Resource;* and professional development for grade 10 teacher leaders. (Education)

Priority: Comprehensive Assessment Program

The Government of Nova Scotia will continue with a comprehensive assessment program for public school students in 2004–2005, to ensure strengths and weaknesses of individuals and their schools can be identified and addressed.

Assessments to be administered in 2004–2005 include

- Junior High Mathematics Program Assessment
- School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) Science Assessment

Nova Scotia Examinations (NSE) will be administered in

- English 12
- English/Communications 12
- Chemistry12 (English and French immersion)
- Physics 12

Development work and field testing will continue in

- Mathematics12/Mathématiques12
- Advanced Mathematics12/ Mathématiques avancée12
- Calcul différential et intégral12 (Education)

Priority: Mathematics Strategy

Improving mathematics education continues to be a priority in 2004–2005. Mathematics Strategy implementation will include

- the provision of textbooks for grade 3 students
- teaching resources for grades primary–6
- information and materials for parents to support their children's mathematics learning in the early years.

The Department of Education will also help school boards provide site-based professional development for teachers of grades primary–9 and will train more math mentors.

Senior high mathematics initiatives will include

- implementation support for Math Plus
- expansion of the Math Essentials pilot
- piloting and implementation of Calculus 12

There will also be professional development for grades 10, 11, and 12 math leaders in every school. (Education)

Priority: Helping Parents and Communities Support Learning

The Government of Nova Scotia will continue efforts to ensure that parents and the school community have a meaningful voice in Nova Scotia's education system.

The Minister of Education will release a formal response to the issues raised through the school advisory councils (SAC) consultation in 2003–2004. This will address the need for clear roles and responsibilities; orientation support for new and current SAC members; strengthening of relationships and communication between and among SACs, the school board, and the department; and supporting SACs in enhancing parent-school communication.

The Literacy Success Strategy and the Mathematics Strategy include specific initiatives to inform and increase the involvement of parents and school advisory councils in supporting student achievement in these priority areas. (Education)

Priority: Creating Caring Learning Environments

A safe and caring school environment can help students reach their full potential by helping them focus on academic and personal goals and outcomes. All school community members must be encouraged to respect and support each other and to behave in an appropriate manner.

Government will proceed in 2004–2005 with implementation of the Positive and Effective Behavioural Support initiative, including

- School Code of Conduct Guidelines
- a resource guide, *Meeting Behaviour Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments*
- other anti-bullying initiatives

Government will provide additional funding to continue working toward implementation of key recommendations of the BLAC *Report on Education.* (Education)

Priority: Improving Access to Public School Education

The government will continue to increase access to public school courses through correspondence study and online to meet the unique needs of high school students and adult learners who are unable to attend school.

The Correspondence Study Program (CSP) currently serves approximately 2,300 students. Around half are enrolled in public schools and use correspondence study to get credits that are not available in their schools or cannot fit into their academic schedules. Other CSP students may be unable to attend school due to travel with parents or sports teams, illness, suspension, or incarceration.

Mature adults increasingly use CSP courses as a refresher for post-secondary study after being in the work force for many years. They may apply credits towards either a public school graduation certificate or a diploma from the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning.

The range of advanced high school in-class and distance education courses will be expanded, beginning in 2004–2005, with the development of a framework for the provision of advanced social studies, fine arts, and language arts courses. Correspondence study courses scheduled for implementation in 2004–2005 include

- Mathematics 8
- Mathematics Foundations 10
- Biology 11
- Chemistry 11
- English Communications 12
- Geology 12

In partnership with universities, the department will develop new advanced physics courses for grades 11 and 12. (Education)

Priority: Expanding Language Education Options

Nova Scotia's junior high school students are required to study a second language. In addition to French, school boards now have the option of offering both Gaelic and Mi'kmaw.

Teaching and learning resources are being developed to support Mi'kmaw language curriculum delivery at the grade 7 level. Mi'kmaw Language 7 is designed for the participation of both Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw students. The Department of Education will also develop Mi'kmaw Language 8 and 9.

Depending on student demand and other factors, school boards may choose to offer Mi'kmaw Language 7 in 2004–2005. The course is now offered at Sherwood Park Education Centre in the Cape Breton–Victoria Regional School Board and the Riverside Education Centre in the Chignecto Central School Board. (Education)

Priority: Student Loan Designation Policy

The Government of Nova Scotia will take steps to improve the performance of the student loan portfolio and reduce the number of students who take on too much debt.

A designation policy for post-secondary institutions will be implemented in 2004–2005. The designation of an institution for student loan purposes means that students enrolled in that institution are eligible to receive student loans.

The policy will specify how to become eligible and maintain eligibility for student loan funding. It will put a greater responsibility on educational institutions to ensure that their programs are relevant to today's labour market, that students are provided with information and advice about student loans, and that changes in student status are reported promptly to the department.

Over time, the designation policy is expected to increase the repayment rate

and thereby lower the bad debt expense borne by taxpayers. The cost of bad debt in 2003–2004 was $5.2 million, and if left unchecked, it is projected to be $8 million by 2006–2007. (Education)

Priority: Community College Upgrades

Government will continue the second year of the Community College Growth Plan, increasing capacity through renovations at six rural campuses (Burridge, Cumberland, Kingstec, Pictou, Lunenburg, and Marconi) and the I. W. Akerley campus.

Each NSCC campus will benefit from the investment. Construction and renovation will take place at different rates over the next four years. At the completion of this project, 2500 more students will have access to NSCC programs across the province. (Education)

Priority: Enhancing Public Libraries

Government provided additional resources to Nova Scotia's public libraries at the end of 2003–2004, in recognition of their vital role in lifelong learning. The extra $750,000 will help libraries across the province achieve the minimum service standards as set out in the *Standards for Nova Scotia Regional Public Libraries*. Also, $250,000 will be invested in public libraries in 2004–2005. (Education)

Priority: Labour Market and Skills Development

Government will contribute to the development of initiatives under the Canada-Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework. Community organizations can apply for funding through four regional Service Delivery Partnership Committees.

The key priorities for joint federal-provincial action in 2004–2005 are

- Apprenticeship
- Learning and Earning
- Employability
- Career Development and Employment Counselling
- Immigration
- Labour Market Information
- Youth

The Department of Education will convene forums to discuss emerging labour force skill development challenges and opportunities facing Nova Scotia. These will include representatives from industry, labour, education and training providers, community organizations, government, and individuals.

Government will increase the participation of under-represented groups in apprenticeship and workplace education programs through initiatives such as the Joint Registration Agreement with Membertou First Nations and the One Journey Project, a partnership with the Department of Community Services.

The Department of Education will continue to lead the Forum of Labour Market Ministers Secretariat in 2004–2005. The secretariat facilitates interjurisdictional discussion and co-operation between the federal and provincial/territorial governments on labour market issues. (Education)

Priority: Helping At-Risk Youth

Government will work with partners to develop a program to help at-risk youth develop personal and employability skills through engagement in construction projects, community development, and academic upgrading.

Funding will be pursued through existing federal and provincial programs and corporate contributions.

Government will also work with partners to develop the Youth Apprenticeship Initiative. This will allow high school students to experience careers in skilled trades and technologies and, thereby, make more informed career choices. The capacity of apprenticeship training will be increased to offer more sections of training to registered apprentices to help them move toward certification. (Education)

Priority: School Construction

The Government of Nova Scotia has approved funding for 12 new school construction projects in 2004–2005:

Five school construction projects are now under way and schools are expected to open in 2004–2005:

- Amherst Elementary
  Cumberland Co.
- Cumberland Elementary
  Nappan, Cumberland Co.
- Shelburne High
  Town of Shelburne, Shelburne Co.
- Sydney Elementary
  Cape Breton Co.
- Truro Junior High
  Colchester Co.

Planning and construction will begin for seven additional school projects in 2004-2005. These are expected to open over the next two fiscal years:

- Barrington High
  Shelburne Co.
- Hammonds Plains Elementary
  Halifax Co.
- Harbourside/Robert Jamieson High
  Halifax Co.
- Rankin Education Centre
  Iona, Victoria Co.

- St. Patricks/Queen Elizabeth High Halifax Co.
- Truro West Elementary Colchester Co.
- Western HRM High School to be located between Tantallon and Timberlea, Halifax Co.

Government will also work on an improved long-term process for planning and construction of schools projects. (Education)

Priority: School Building Improvements

Government will proceed with additions and/or alterations to 21 schools in 2004–2005. This is part of a multi-year program to address the condition of buildings, environmental concerns, and program needs at these schools. A database of school renovation and maintenance needs will be developed in conjunction with school boards. (Education)

Priority: Francophone Family Literacy

In concert with Équipe d'alphabétisation Nouvelle-Écosse, the Department of Education will begin a multi-year Francophone family literacy strategy, with financial support from the National Literacy Secretariat under the Official Languages Minority Community program. (Education)

Priority: Investing in Universities

Government is continuing to invest in post-secondary education at a cost Nova Scotians can afford. Additional funding of $8 million was provided to universities in 2003-2004. Government continues to work on multi-year agreements with the universities to define expectations and provide more stable funding.

Education—Measuring Our Performance

Measure: **School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) Results (Education)**

Outcome: Better educated Nova Scotians

Nova Scotia's SAIP assesses 13- and 16-year-old students in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. On average, subjects are tested every four or five years. There are five levels of performance, and the national standard for performance for 16-year-olds is set at level 3.

Performance Highlights and Targets

Reading: In 1998, Nova Scotia's results were below the national average.

Writing: In 1998, English students scored above the national average, while French students scored below the national average.

Math: In 2001, English students scored below the national average, while French students scored above the national average.

Science: In 1999, Nova Scotia's results were similar to the national average.

Our target is to work to improve SAIP results for all subjects, using the national average as our benchmark for future performance. (Note 3)

Note 3: In 2007, the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) will replace the SAIP. PCAP will assess 13- and 15-year-olds, which will permit comparisons with international results through the Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA).

Measure: **High School Graduation Rate (Education)**

Outcome: Better educated Nova Scotians

This is a measure of the percentage of students receiving a high school diploma compared with the number of students who were in grade 9 three years earlier.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In June 2002, the graduation rate was 80 per cent, up from 79.0 per cent in 2001 and 74.9 per cent in 1996. Our target is to increase the graduation rate.

Measure: **Participation in the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (Education)**

Outcome: Better educated Nova Scotians

Nova Scotians need opportunities to continue to learn throughout their lives. This program supports the delivery of adult education programs that enable Nova Scotians to improve literacy levels and earn credits toward a high school diploma.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002–2003, the second year of operation for the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, there were 4,000 enrollments in programs (2001–2002, 3,700). The participation rate is expected to continue to increase in future years.

Measure: **Nova Scotians with Post-Secondary Education (Education)**

Outcome: Better educated Nova Scotians

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002, 59.1 per cent of Nova Scotians, aged 25–54, had a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree (2001, 59.9 per cent). We aim to have this percentage continue to increase.

Measure: **P–12 Computer Ratio (Education)**

Outcome: A technology-enhanced learning environment

Computers support student learning and achievement and help prepare them for the labour market. Two ratios are provided: total students to total computers and total students to current computers. "Current" is defined as a computer having sufficient capacity to run modern applications.

Performance Highlights and Targets

As of March 31, 2003, there were 5.1 students for every computer (2002, 6.2) and 6.7 students for every current computer (2002, 9.3). Our target for 2005–2006 is a ratio of 5 to 1 in terms of total students to total computers.

3. The Economy

The Government of Nova Scotia continues to invest in economic measures that will bring prosperity to the province, now and in future, and help Nova Scotians become more self-sufficient.

The budget will be balanced in 2004–2005 for the third year in a row, and the government has also set aside funds for debt reduction.

At the same time, the government will continue with strategic investments and programs to support the province's economic development strategy, *Opportunities for Prosperity*.

In recognition of the need for increased immigration to contribute to the province's economic growth and social development, the Government of Nova Scotia will develop a comprehensive, coordinated immigration strategy in 2004–2005.

To help farmers manage the risks inherent in their business, the government will contribute to a new generation of agriculture business risk management programs under the Canada–Nova Scotia Implementation Agreement for the Agriculture Policy Framework.

The government will continue to maintain and improve the economic infrastructure of the province in 2004–2005, with improvements to Nova Scotia's 100-series highway system, as well as rural roads and bridges. Legislation will also be introduced to enable the creation of a Capital District Transportation Authority.

The government will provide support to growth-oriented small businesses in Nova Scotia and will introduce a supplier development program to help them bid on government goods and services.

The Brand Nova Scotia initiative will be further developed in 2004–2005 to promote Nova Scotia's image at home and abroad. This will help focus Nova Scotia's image and convey a consistent message: that Nova Scotia is a great place to live, visit, invest in, and do business.

The government will support a variety of initiatives in the tourism, culture, and heritage sectors. These include a music strategy, initiatives under the 2004 Tourism Plan, and events such as the Congrès mondial acadien, which is expected to bring thousands of visitors to Nova Scotia to celebrate their Acadian heritage.

The Economy—Priorities 2004–2005

Priority: Balanced Budget

The Government of Nova Scotia will bring in a balanced budget for the third year in a row in 2004–2005, continuing to meet its commitment under balanced budget legislation.

The government's fiscal plan includes a balanced budget for 2004–2005 and beyond. Staff continue to monitor, report, and advise on ongoing implementation of the fiscal plan.

This year's budget includes additional investments to meet public demands for health care, education, and other services. Revenues were increased in a number of areas to ensure that the budget is balanced.

A small surplus is expected in the 2003–2004 fiscal year, despite the financial adversities related to Hurricane Juan, the winter storm of 2004, and agricultural and public health issues. (Finance)

Priority: Debt Reduction Plan

The government is moving forward with its Debt Reduction Plan, and legislation will be included in the Financial Measures Act.

The Debt Reduction Plan includes an annual process of creating surpluses and contingency reserves for debt reduction, establishing a Debt Retirement Fund, and designating a portion of any extraordinary revenue to the fund.

The 2004–2005 budget includes funds set aside for debt reduction, and the government will make its first deposit into the Debt Retirement Fund this year. (Finance)

Priority: Competitive Taxation

The Government of Nova Scotia remains committed to a fair, efficient, and competitive tax environment. This is key to maintaining long-term economic growth for any jurisdiction in today's global economy.

Governments must, however, manage this process against increasing demands and real cost increases in essential government services such as health care. Part of maintaining a competitive and sustainable tax environment is having adequate funding for health care from our federal partners and ensuring that the Government of Canada lives up to its constitutional commitment to transfers.

In 2003–2004, the government introduced tax reductions, which took effect January 1, 2004. In addition, a one-time payment was made to taxpayers (the Nova Scotia Taxpayer Refund) to ensure that tax dollars were returned as soon as possible. Changes will be introduced to 2004 tax reductions in this year's budget to ensure that the province has sufficient revenues to meet its priorities without returning to a deficit position.

These changes will ensure that tax reductions are maintained for the lowest-income individuals in Nova Scotia. They will also ensure that some level of tax relief remains for persons in the middle income levels. These changes will not affect the Nova Scotia Taxpayer Refund program.

The government will also improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized businesses by matching federal changes to the small business deduction threshold.

Priority: Promoting Immigration

The Government of Nova Scotia will develop a comprehensive, coordinated immigration strategy in 2004–2005. Nova Scotia must increase immigration to sustain or increase its economic growth and social development.

Immigration will be essential to maintain a productive workforce in Nova Scotia. Statistics show that Nova Scotia's population is aging, and the birthrate is declining. In 2003, Nova Scotia attracted only 0.6 per cent (1,474 individuals) of the Canadian total of immigrants.

The Immigration Strategy is designed to find ways to attract immigrants to the province, help them integrate into the community, and encourage them to stay in the province.

Components of the strategy will focus on helping people communicate in one or both official languages and getting their credentials assessed and recognized so they can get work in their field of expertise.

The strategy will build on existing immigration support systems, including the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program (PNP). This five-year agreement with the Government of Canada allows Nova Scotia to nominate 200 skilled immigration candidates and their accompanying family members each year.

All levels of government, business, and the community will play a part in strategies to attract, integrate, and retain immigrants. Discussions with key stakeholders are under way, and it is anticipated that the strategy will be implemented by the summer of 2005. (Education; Office of Economic Development; Intergovernmental Affairs; Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

Priority: Creating Brand Nova Scotia

The Brand Nova Scotia initiative will be further developed in 2004–2005 to promote Nova Scotia's image at home and abroad. This initiative is designed to focus Nova Scotia's image and convey a consistent message: that Nova Scotia is a great place to live, visit, invest in, and do business.

In 2004–2005, the program aims to reinforce residents' belief in a prosperous, self-reliant Nova Scotia and to educate non-residents about our people, our products, and our quality of life.

A Brand Toolkit will promote a consistent visual identity for Nova Scotia with tools such as a Nova Scotia presentation, a photo library, and a database of images. These can be used in multi-sector Nova Scotia awareness campaigns and in public/private sector projects to help

reinforce the brand messages. The initiative will also support a series of individual targeted marketing activities.

The Office of Economic Development will lead the initiative, with participation from several other government departments and private-sector partners. (Office of Economic Development)

Priority: Market Diversification

Nova Scotia Business Incorporated will continue to support exporters' efforts to open new markets and expand in existing domestic and international markets. "Export Prospector" will be a principal tool, as will targeted sales call programs in selected markets and strategic sectors.

NSBI will continue to support the coordination of provincial trade activities in Nova Scotia, the Team Canada Atlantic Trade Mission Program, and activities under an extended International Business Development Agreement. (Nova Scotia Business Incorporated)

Priority: Supplier Development

The government will introduce a supplier development program in 2004–2005 to help small businesses bid on government goods and services.

The program will include outreach services for small businesses to promote understanding of how procurement works, how to access tender opportunities, and the importance of quality products and services. Improved access to these competitive opportunities should result in increased activity for small business and, ultimately, improve their export readiness.

The program will be compatible with existing trade agreements that govern public procurement. (Office of Economic Development)

Priority: 2004 Tourism Plan

The government will work with industry to implement the 2004 Annual Tourism Plan in Nova Scotia.

Developed by the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council—a collaboration of the tourism industry and the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage—the plan advances the objectives of the Nova Scotia Tourism Strategy and the industry-wide Tourism Vision: to double tourism revenues by the year 2012.

Priorities for 2004 include

- marketing campaigns in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, and the northeast United States designed to motivate travel to Nova Scotia
- improving online tourism information on Nova Scotia by revamping Nova Scotia's official tourism website
- initiatives aimed to expand the tourism season and enhance market-readiness and product quality
- linking existing and new tourism,

cultural, and heritage tourism experiences to the group-tour marketplace

- an enhanced travel media program to augment "brand" awareness of Nova Scotia in core markets (Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

Priority: L'Année de l'Acadie

The government will provide support in 2004–2005 to the Congrès mondial acadien, a family reunion of Acadians from around the world.

From July 31 to August 15, 2004, some 95 families will hold reunions, ranging in size from 200 to 7,000 participants. In total, 65,000 family members are expected to participate, and as many as 250,000 people with Acadian ancestry are expected to visit the province to share their heritage and celebrate their culture.

Related activities such as concerts, conferences, and community-based events will also be held. On the whole, 1,200 activities will take place in Nova Scotia.

The third of its kind, the Congrès mondial acadien was previously held in Louisiana in 1999 and in New Brunswick in 1994. The 2004 edition of Congrès is particularly special as it falls on the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the French in North America (1604). It is also the return to the birthplace of Acadia, since Acadians settled in Nova Scotia before the deportation.

Premier John Hamm has declared 2004 as L'Annee de l'Acadie, in recognition of the 400th anniversary of French settlement, an important part of Nova Scotia's ancestry. The government has introduced legislation that would proclaim August 15 as Provincial Acadian Day. (Tourism, Culture and Heritage; Acadian Affairs)

Priority: Promoting Cultural Industries

The culture sector plays a significant role in Nova Scotia's identity as well as in its economy.

Statistics Canada estimates that the sector contributed almost $1.2 billion to the provincial economy in 2001, with some 28,000 direct and indirect jobs depending on cultural activities.

The government will continue to work with cultural industry partners on several growth initiatives to build greater prosperity. Activities for 2004–2005 include

- new programs in support of Nova Scotia's first Music Strategy, in consultation with the Music Industry Association of Nova Scotia; an annual investment of $750,000 will be directed to helping businesses make inroads into foreign markets and enhance skills to encourage economic growth, competitiveness, and prosperity
- "Bringin' it home! Nova Scotia Music on Tour," a program to foster new

income-generating opportunities for Nova Scotia's music industry and provide an outlet for Nova Scotian creators to develop audience appeal and support

- investment in an industry growth proposal developed by the Nova Scotia Book Publishers Group
- working with sector partners on an Industry Growth Program to promote Nova Scotia's theatres, crafts, and visual arts
- developing a management agreement with the Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council, which will oversee facilities and cover services provided by the Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design (Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

Priority: Heritage Strategy for Nova Scotia

The government will begin development of a heritage strategy to protect and promote what Nova Scotians value about the province: the diversity of our people, our natural beauty, and our communities. This initiative will be the foundation for major projects in the heritage sector.

Priorities include creation of a comprehensive marketing and communications plan for the heritage community and identification of Nova Scotians' preferences regarding community museums, built heritage, special places, and other heritage resources.

We will collect heritage stories that are important to Nova Scotians, focusing on the Nova Scotia Museum, community museums, and other heritage resources and on heritage product development. (Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

Priority: Improvements to 100-Series Highways

The government will continue to make improvements to Nova Scotia's 100-series highway system in 2004–2005. Some $20 million will be spent on design work, environmental screenings, and highway construction. Highway construction projects for the coming year will include

- Highway 103 near Tantallon
- Highway 103 near Barrington
- Highway 125 twinning
- Highway 101 intersection replacements (Transportation and Public Works)

Priority: Increased Funding for 4R's Program

The government will increase capital program funding by $6 million in 2004–2005 for the 4R's program (resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction) on provincial highways and bridges.

The 4R's program expands our current capital and maintenance improvement programs and includes projects across the province, such as the Cabot Trail repaving

project from Point de Havre Road north to Cape Breton Highlands Park. (Transportation and Public Works)

Priority: Maintaining Rural Roads

The government will increase the amount of highway maintenance work carried out on rural roads in 2004–2005, including asphalt patching, ditching and gravelling, shoulder repairs, brush cutting, and additional guardrails.

This will be accomplished through increased funding for the Road Improvement Money (RIM) program, from $10 million to $20 million over a four-year period. In the first year, the increase will be an additional $2.5 million, bringing the total for 2004–2005 to $12.5 million. (Transportation and Public Works)

Priority: Steel Truss Bridge Replacement Program

The government will continue the five-year $50-million Steel Truss Bridge Replacement Program.

In 2004–2005, year two of the program, $9 million will be invested. Further progress will be made on design work and environmental screening. Designs for up to 10 bridges and construction of 7 bridges are planned. (Transportation and Public Works)

Priority: Supporting Research and Development

The government was able to invest $5 million in fiscal 2003–2004 to support new research and development in Nova Scotia. Over the next three years, provincial funding, with support from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and from private partners, will represent an investment of more than $21 million in R&D activities in Nova Scotia. (Office of Economic Development)

Priority: Agriculture Business Risk Management

In 2004–2005, the government will implement a new generation of agriculture business risk management programs under the Canada–Nova Scotia Implementation Agreement for the Agriculture Policy Framework. These programs are designed to reduce and manage the risks that have an impact on farmers' incomes and production.

The Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization (CAIS) program helps producers protect their farming operations from small and large drops in income. The Production Insurance Program complements the CAIS Program by providing protection against losses caused by natural perils beyond the producers' control, such as drought and flooding.

The Canada–Nova Scotia Implementation Agreement for the Agriculture Policy

Framework will provide new opportunities for processors, producers, and agri-businesses. This will include better coordination of production, processing, and marketing to consumers at the retail level.

The government will continue to support research and development of new life-science products, including functional foods, nutraceuticals, and alternative energy technologies using plant-based sources. Investments will also be made to enhance economic viability, farm and food safety, and environmental stewardship in the agriculture sector. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

Priority: Streamlining the Natural Gas Regulatory Environment

In 2004–2005, the Government of Nova Scotia will work with the Government of Canada on improvements to the regulatory environment for natural gas development. This includes participation in the Atlantic Energy Roundtable III and the Regulatory Issues Working Committee.

Work will be undertaken to eliminate overlap and duplication in regulatory processes and reduce the amount of time it takes for a project to be approved. An efficient and effective regulatory environment for natural gas development, production, and transmission helps attract potential investors to Nova Scotia. (Energy)

Priority: Promoting Consumer Use of Natural Gas

Residential and commercial distribution of natural gas in Nova Scotia started in 2003–2004.

The industry-supported Gas Market Development Fund will be established this year to promote the use of natural gas in residential, commercial, and public buildings.

The Department of Energy will help coordinate this industry fund for Nova Scotians interested in converting to natural gas. Information will be provided on conversion for space heating and hot water that focuses on efficiency and safety. (Energy)

Priority: Offshore Resource Revenues

Three years after the launch of the Campaign for Fairness by Premier John Hamm, the Government of Canada decided in its 2004-2005 budget to reset the petroleum offset mechanism under the equalization formula for the Sable Offshore Energy Project, resulting in a one-time payment of $29.5 million to the province for 2004-2005 and $3.7 million in 2005-2006.

In the course of formal discussions which have been underway with the Government of Canada for the last 18 months, the Nova Scotia government will continue to press Ottawa to fully deliver the commitment made to Nova Scotians under the Canada-

Nova Scotia Offshore Accord Implementation Act. As stated in this law passed by both the Parliament of Canada and the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, Nova Scotia must be the principal beneficiary of its offshore resources. Moreover, the Nova Scotia government will continue to urge the federal government to adopt regulations under the act pertaining to the provinces legislated right to Crown Share Adjustment Payments. (Energy, Intergovernmental Affairs)

Priority: Promoting Competition in the Electricity Market

The government will continue in 2004–2005 to implement recommendations of the 2003 Electricity Marketplace Governance Committee Final Report. Changes in the electricity regulatory framework will be introduced to allow open bidding for new generation capacity and renewables and to begin opening markets to competition.

Opening the wholesale market to competition, creating a competitive process for new electrical generation capacity requirements, and encouraging renewable energy and co-generation will allow for a more competitive industry, which offers more choices to consumers. (Energy)

Priority: Community Development Policy

The government will finalize a new Community Development Policy in 2004–2005 to promote the long-term sustainability and growth of Nova Scotian communities, especially small rural ones.

After a series of consultations across the province in 2003, an interdepartmental committee will work to finalize the policy this year and seek approval to proceed with implementation. (Office of Economic Development)

Priority: Promoting Small Business Growth

The government will increase its focus in 2004–2005 on the needs of growth-oriented, smaller businesses in Nova Scotia. More than 90 per cent of Nova Scotian businesses have fewer than 50 employees, accounting for more than 51 per cent of total employment in the province and contributing significantly to economic growth and prosperity.

Nova Scotia Business Incorporated (NSBI) has created a Small Business Growth group and will focus resources on helping small businesses. NSBI staff will work with companies to help them overcome key challenges, such as training and upgrading employees, keeping abreast of market trends, accessing growth capital, and developing exports. (Nova Scotia Business Incorporated)

Priority: Continuing the Coal Industry in Cape Breton

The government will work to provide for a continuing coal industry in Cape Breton by addressing the issuing of coal leases

following surrender of Special Mining Lease 90-2 (coal) by the Cape Breton Development Corporation (CBDC).

The first tender call for surface coal resources, issued in December 2003, will be evaluated. Where appropriate, new coal leases will be issued. A tender will also be completed for the Donkin coal resource. (Natural Resources)

Priority: Capital District Transportation Authority

The government will introduce legislation to enable the establishment of a Capital District Transportation Authority. The authority would be responsible for strategic transportation planning for the region, including resolving the traffic- and transportation-related problems resulting from the Halifax Regional Municipality's growing population. Work to develop the authority itself will continue in 2004–2005. (Transportation and Public Works)

Priority: Infirmary Demolition

The government will begin in the fall of 2004 the first phase of a two-year project to demolish the old Halifax Infirmary building on Queen Street and remediate the site.

The infirmary is currently vacant, and there is no other useful purpose for the building. Demolition and site remediation will allow for future development of this property. (Transportation and Public Works)

Economy—Measuring Our Performance

Measure: **Balanced/Surplus Budget (Finance)**

Outcome: Improved economic climate

This measure reflects the government's achievement of fiscal targets.

Performance Highlights and Targets

The government's audited financial statements reflected a $31.6-million surplus for 2002–2003. The latest forecast for 2003–2004, as reported in the 2004–2005 Estimates, reflects a small surplus. The government is budgeting a small surplus position for the 2004–2005 year. The government's long-term fiscal plan reflects balanced budgets to 2007–2008.

Measure: **Net Direct Debt (NDD) as a Percentage of GDP (Finance)**

Outcome: Improved economic climate

This is a measure of the province's fiscal sustainability and flexibility. The higher the ratio, the greater the province's debt burden on the provincial economy.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002–2003, the province's NDD to GDP was 45 per cent, down from 46.5 per cent in 2001–2002. Note that the 2001–2002 ratio has been restated from that reported last year to reflect retroactive accounting policy changes to the province's financial statements required by generally accepted accounting principles. Our target is to reduce the net direct debt to gross domestic product ratio.

Measure: **Corporate Income and Capital Tax Burden (Finance)**

Outcome: Improved economic/business climate

Corporate income and capital tax rates measure the overall business tax rate applied to Nova Scotia business. It tells us about the general tax rates applied to business income and to business capital—the two major elements of business investment.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2003, Nova Scotia's corporate and capital tax rates were generally competitive with other Atlantic provinces, and this will continue to be the goal in future years.

Measure: **Marginal Effective Personal Tax Rates (Finance)**

Outcome: Improved economic climate

This measure indicates how much tax an individual can expect to pay on the next dollar of taxable income earned. The income brackets are distinguished by the terms low (up to $30,000), middle (up to $60,000), high (over $60,000), and high plus (the start of a high-income surtax based on the amount of basic tax payable or another income bracket, $100,000).

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2003, Nova Scotia's personal income tax rates were generally competitive with Atlantic Canada. On January 1, 2004, marginal personal tax rates were reduced by approximately 10 per cent, becoming the lowest in Atlantic Canada. We are committed to remaining competitive with other provinces, particularly the Atlantic provinces.

Measure: **Credit Rating by Major Rating Agencies (Finance)**

Outcome: Improved economic climate

A credit rating is a rating agency's evaluation of a borrower's ability and willingness to pay interest and to repay principal. Rating agencies provide investors with measures of the credit quality of bonds or other financial instruments. A credit rating affects the borrower's debt-servicing costs and the investor's rate of return, since an investor will demand a higher interest rate on a more risky, lower-rated security.

Performance Highlights and Targets

We achieved our target to improve our credit rating by 2004–2005 in August 2003 when the Dominion Bond Rating Service (DBRS) increased the province's credit rating to "A (Low)—with a stable outlook" (up from the "BBB (high)" rating in 2001–2002). We plan to maintain this improved credit rating in 2004–2005.

Measure: **Business Climate Index (Office of Economic Development)**

Outcome: Competitive business climate

The Nova Scotia Business Climate Index applies a number of business climate indicators to monitor and compare Nova Scotia's business climate nationally and in Atlantic Canada. The indicators are grouped under four main headings: development capacity, economic performance, tax and fiscal environment, and business vitality.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2003, Nova Scotia's business climate was ranked fourth in Canada—behind Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. The province's strengths included development capacity and tax and fiscal environment. The challenges identified were economic performance and business vitality. In the future, we will strive to maintain the position of best business climate in Atlantic Canada and to improve our ranking nationally.

Measure: **Working Time Lost Due to Strikes and Lockouts (Environment and Labour)**

Outcome: Stable business climate

This is a measure of labour stability, an important factor for economic development.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002, 0.02 per cent of working time was lost because of strikes and lockouts in Nova Scotia (2001, 0.04 per cent). The national average for the same year was 0.09 per cent (2001, 0.07 per cent). Our target is to remain below or at the annual national average.

Measure: **Oil and Gas Exploration Wells Drilled (Energy)**

Outcome: Economic growth

This is a measure of the average number of oil and gas exploration wells drilled in Nova Scotia's offshore over a five-year period. These wells are designed to discover additional oil and gas resources, as opposed to development wells put in place to recover resources already confirmed through exploration. Establishing new reserves will lead to new development projects and will enhance the attractiveness of the offshore area for further exploration and development activities.

Performance Highlights and Targets

Additional gas exploration is crucial to the future of the province's offshore oil and gas industry. From 1998 to 2002, an average of three wells per year were drilled. Another five exploration wells were drilled in 2003–2004 and another two to four wells are expected to be drilled in 2004–2005.

Our original target was to increase the number to eight exploration wells per year by 2004–2005. However, the lack of deepwater commercial success and fisheries and regulatory issues have caused a slowdown in the pace of deepwater drilling.

Measure: **Public/Private Capital Investment (Office of Economic Development)**

Outcome: Infrastructure that supports economic growth

This is a measure of the value of capital expenditures per person for new construction and machinery and equipment. Information on capital spending provides an indication of infrastructure capacity and market conditions in the economy.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002, investment per person in Nova Scotia was $6,162 (2001, $5,356 as revised). Statistics Canada attributes the bulk of this change to increased activity in mining and oil and gas extraction.

Nova Scotia's investment per person was roughly 91 per cent of the national average in 2002. Our goal is to increase investment per capita over time.

Measure: **International Roughness Index (IRI) for Highways**

Outcome: Infrastructure that supports economic growth

This is a standardized measure of the level of riding comfort on our highways. Riding comfort is measured with a five-point "roughness scale," where 0 is the smoothest ride and 5 is considered unacceptable. A good-quality ride is defined as 1.6 or below by the National IRI Survey (2001).

Performance Highlights and Targets

Highway infrastructure contributes to economic growth. A well-maintained highway network helps industry to access new resources, facilitates the transport of raw materials and finished goods, and enables workers and consumers to reach the workplace and the marketplace. In 2003, the IRI rating for the province's 100-series highways was 1.45 (2002, 1.48). Our target for 100-series highways is to stay below the 2001 National IRI Survey's standard of 1.6.

Measure: **Employment Rate (Finance)**

Outcome: Improved economic activity

This is the percentage of the population (15 years and older) employed in part-time and full-time jobs.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2003, Nova Scotia's average employment rate was 57.3 per cent (2002, 56.7 per cent; 2001, 56.3 per cent; 1997, 52.6 per cent). Canada's employment rate for 2003 was 62.4 per cent (2002, 61.8 per cent; 2001, 61.2 per cent; 1997, 59.0 per cent). Employment rates vary across the province. We will continue to work to increase employment and to close regional gaps.

4. Families and Communities

Investing in Nova Scotia's people and their communities is a critical part of advancing the Government of Nova Scotia's vision in 2004–2005: A Healthy, Prosperous, and Self-Sufficient Nova Scotia.

Government provides supports to thousands of Nova Scotians who for any number of reasons do not have all the resources they need to be healthy and prosperous. Government will add $28 million this year to the Department of Community Services budget to provide extra support to low-income Nova Scotians, families, children, and people with disabilities.

Government will be consulting with clients and stakeholders of the Community Supports for Adults program on ways to improve services to Nova Scotians with disabilities who need day-to-day living support. As well, $1 million has been set aside in the 2004–2005 budget to begin acting on stakeholder recommendations.

Innovative approaches to early child development are ongoing through the federal-provincial Early Child Development Initiative. To promote good health and prevent health problems among our youngest children, government will continue a program to promote physical activity in preschoolers. This will complement a range of other programs and support services, such as childcare support, parent education and support, home-visiting services, and early language development.

Nova Scotians value their personal safety and security. Government will make strategic investments in promoting improved emergency measures planning, highway road safety, and workplace safety.

Improvements to services through the justice and corrections systems will continue in 2004–2005. A new correctional facility in Yarmouth will get up and running, and development work on new police and corrections legislation will proceed.

Families and Communities 2004–2005 Priorities

Priority: Employment Support Services Review

August 2004 will mark the third anniversary of the implementation of the new Employment Support and Income Assistance Program. Since its inception, the number of Nova Scotians in need of income assistance has been declining.

The program focuses on helping people become more self-sufficient. This contributes to a growing economy that includes all citizens and regions of the province.

In 2004–2005, government will conduct an evaluation of the Employment Support Services component of the Employment Supports and Income Assistance Program.

The goal is to ensure that appropriate, affordable, and responsive services are available to meet the changing needs of clients and that these services enable clients to increase their level of employability and their ability to support themselves. (Community Services)

Priority: Early Child Development Initiative

The Government of Nova Scotia will continue to invest in programs and services to enhance the lives of young children in 2004–2005. Providing support to families today will help children grow up to be strong, healthy, and happy and will contribute to the province's long-term success.

To date, more than $36 million has been provided under the Early Childhood Development Initiative—jointly funded by the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia. In 2004–2005, government will make further enhancements to programs that support the following:

- speech and cognitive development of children through the expansion of the new Early Language and Learning Program
- childcare subsidies for low-income families
- providing information on childcare options, parent education, and other support services available in their communities through the expansion of the new Child Care Information and Support Program
- working in partnership with Family Resource Centres to continue parent volunteer programs and expand parent education programs
- inclusion strategies for children with special needs to participate in and benefit from childcare programs
- support for parents with children under the age of 3 by enhancing the Healthy Beginnings Home Visiting Program, incorporating community-based home visitors to reach more families in need. (Community Services)

Priority: Housing Services

Government will continue programs to help Nova Scotians get access to safe and affordable housing. Investment in this area is crucial, as Nova Scotia has both an aging housing stock and an aging population.

Government will work with community agencies, non-profit organizations, and the private sector to maximize the potential funds available under the Canada–Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement.

The governments of Nova Scotia and Canada will continue with Residential Rehabilitation Assistance (RRAP) Programs.

These help low-income Nova Scotians get needed home repairs and help seniors adapt their homes to enable them to live independently.

The Department of Community Services will consider proposals from potential developers for new rental housing projects. (Community Services)

Priority: Community Supports for Adults

In 2004–2005, government will launch a new Community Supports for Adults program. The goal is to have a modern, equitable, responsive, and sustainable residential/vocational support system that will ensure that people with disabilities are healthy and safe and have opportunities to participate as citizens in their communities.

Consultations to date with clients, families, advocacy organizations, service providers, and staff indicate that the current system is struggling and that change is long overdue.

Public feedback is being collected on a discussion paper, *Renewing the Community Supports for Adults Program*, which was based on research and a review of trends in other provinces. The paper presents a number of options for improving the residential support system for adults with disabilities.

In 2004–2005, Community Services will consult with stakeholders, summarize the feedback from the discussion paper, finalize the development of a renewed program model, and seek approval to begin implementation. As well, $1 million has been set aside in the 2004–2005 budget to begin acting on recommendations. (Community Services)

Priority: Responding to Domestic Violence

Government will continue to work with police and partners in the community to provide a coordinated response to domestic violence.

The Domestic Violence Case Co-ordination Program will receive an additional $100,000 to support the program's mandate to enhance police capacity in coordinated case management, particularly in identifying high-risk situations and ensuring proactive referrals to, and ongoing information-sharing with, appropriate primary service agencies. (Justice)

Priority: Redesign of Adoption Services

Government will continue work to redesign Nova Scotia's adoption program. The goal is to help families who want to adopt a child, so that children in care have greater opportunities to live with families in stable home environments.

Adopting a child in Nova Scotia is a lengthy process that may take years. This can be discouraging for families who want to adopt. Not only does it add to the cost of maintaining children in the care and custody of the Department of Community Services, but more importantly, it means that many children do not have the opportunity to live in a family environment.

Research has shown that a secure, stable family environment is an important factor in healthy child development.

Work began on this initiative in late 2003–2004 with a review of adoption legislation and programs across the country. During 2004–2005, as part of the development of a new adoption service model, options for changes to the current system will be developed and consultations will be held with existing service delivery agencies and identified stakeholders. A recommended model will be developed, together with strategies for implementation. (Community Services)

Priority: Emergency Measures Planning

Hurricane Juan, the major winter storm of 2004, and other natural and human events have highlighted the importance of a well functioning Emergency Measures Organization. Government will increase funding to Nova Scotia's EMO to increase its efforts to help Nova Scotians avoid preventable emergencies and recover quickly when there is a problem.

Activities will include

- planning for disaster mitigation and disaster recovery
- negotiation of changes to federal Disaster Financial Assistance arrangements to ensure that the program meets the needs of Nova Scotians (disaster financial assistance guide will be created to assist municipal administrators as well as government departments and agencies in identifying and documenting eligible costs and preparing a claim for recovery of eligible expenditures)
- broader EMO involvement in business continuity planning, to ensure that the province has the ability to provide key government services and operate vital facilities during an emergency
- more active participation in the federal National Disaster Mitigation Strategy (NDMS) which develops co-operative arrangements among three levels of government to reduce the effects of natural disasters
- helping business and government to develop internal capacity to identify and mitigate risks, both natural and human induced, that may contribute to emergencies (Emergency Measures Organization)

Priority: Public Safety and Security

Government will continue to work with the federal government, the RCMP, and local law enforcement agencies to protect public safety in the face of new terrorist threats. This will include development of a strategic framework to improve public safety.

Government is also taking steps to support the federal government in implementing a national sex offender registry. This registry will improve public safety in Nova Scotia by enhancing the monitoring of sex offenders.

Government will continue work on a new Police Act. (Justice)

Priority: Promoting Safety on Nova Scotia Roads

Government will continue its efforts to improve the safety of Nova Scotia roads. Efforts in 2004–2005 will include the review of the graduated licensing program and development of a system to identify priority high-collision road locations for improvement.

A 2003 report by the Atlantic Network for Injury Prevention found that unintended injuries cost Nova Scotians $372 million in 1999. Motor vehicle crashes accounted for $74 million.

Government will proceed with an injury prevention strategy focusing on the three main causes of injury—motor vehicle collisions, falls, and self-inflicted injury. The initiative is led by Office of Health Promotion, with participation from Transportation and Public Works, other government departments, and many non-government organizations.

Nova Scotia's Road Safety Advisory Committee provides advice on the road safety component. The committee has representation from non-profit organizations, government, industry, policing agencies, and others.

The committee is guided by Road Safety Vision 2010, a national plan that aims to reduce the number of road users killed and seriously injured across Canada by 30 per cent by 2010. Alcohol countermeasures, occupant restraint, driver behaviour, and pedestrian, bicycle, and motorcycle safety are its main areas of concern. (Transportation and Public Works, Office of Health Promotion)

Priority: Fire and Building Code improvements

Government will implement the 2004 edition of the national fire and building codes under the Building Code Act and Fire Safety Act.

While maintaining rigorous safety standards, these new codes allow for greater flexibility in construction and fire safety regulation and represent the conclusion of a 10-year national review. (Environment and Labour)

Priority: Workplace Safety

Government will implement Criminal Code amendments (Bill C-45) relative to occupational health and safety offences in 2004–2005.

The departments of Justice and Environment and Labour will work with other agencies to define the process whereby a criminal code investigation may be triggered in an occupational health and safety compliance matter. (Justice, Environment and Labour)

Priority: Enhancing Correctional Services

Government continues to invest in the network of correctional facilities throughout Nova Scotia.

The opening of the new Southwest Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Yarmouth marks the continuing shift toward modern correctional facility design and state-of-the-art security features to ensure the best protection of the public, correctional employees, and inmates. The facility will house up to 38 offenders and employ 30 people with an annual operating budget of $1.92 million.

Government will update the Correctional Services Act in 2004–2005 to ensure that legislation reflects current theory and practice in the corrections field. (Justice)

Priority: Improving Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

In 1999, the Supreme Court (Family Division) was established to deal with all family law court matters in Halifax Regional Municipality and in Cape Breton.

This court and its services give people the opportunity to resolve family matters in a more co-operative and less adversarial manner by providing an alternative to a court trial. Services provided through this court include conciliation and mediation services, as well as relevant information and educational programs.

Given the positive public response to this service, the government will continue to press the federal government to expand these services province-wide to ensure that all Nova Scotians have access.

Government is also taking steps to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and access to courts by assisting and educating self-represented litigants. (Justice)

Priority: Improving the Justice Information System

Government is in the final phase of implementing the new Justice Enterprise Information Network (JEIN), which will give Nova Scotia among the most integrated justice information system in Canada.

This system will allow even greater connectivity to justice partners. It is easier to use and less costly to run than the current system and is more technologically adaptable to future requirements. (Justice)

Priority: Sunday Shopping Plebiscite

Legislation was passed in the fall of 2003 authorizing a province-wide plebiscite to be held in conjunction with the fall 2004 municipal elections. This will allow Nova Scotians to decide whether Sunday retail opening should be implemented on a year-round basis or in the weeks before Christmas.

If the majority of Nova Scotians votes in favour of deregulated shopping hours, that policy will be implemented. If the majority votes against, the current arrangements will stand.

The 2003 legislation provides a fair and balanced approach for both workers and businesses. Workers will have the right to refuse to work on Sundays, and store owners can choose whether to open on Sundays. (Justice)

Priority: Special Building Access and Transportation

Government will continue to fund programs to improve access to community buildings and rural transportation for seniors, people with disabilities, and disadvantaged Nova Scotians. This is mainly through the Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP), Accessible Transportation Assistance Program (ATAP), and the Community Accessibility Program. (SNSMR)

Priority: Treaty and Aboriginal Rights.

The Government of Nova Scotia, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, and the Government of Canada will proceed in 2004–2005 with their commitment, under the June 2002 Umbrella Agreement, to work together in good faith on issues of mutual concern. In particular, this includes matters related to treaty and Aboriginal rights.

The three parties have begun work on a Framework Agreement, which will outline the process and procedures for the negotiations and will identify the substantive issues the parties intend to address.

A draft Framework Agreement will be submitted for internal review in this fiscal year. (Aboriginal Affairs)

Priority: Resource Guide for Young Women

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women will develop and publish a resource guide for young women that alerts them to the choices they will make as they move into adulthood.

The resource will cover the importance of education to enhancing economic self-sufficiency and career opportunities; top-paying jobs in Nova Scotia, including jobs in trades and technology, and women's entrepreneurship; information about their health, including healthy lifestyle choices, healthy relationships, and personal safety; political involvement and young women in leadership; family issues and economic security; and a list of community resources (e.g., women's centres, youth organizations, local health centres). (Advisory Council on the Status of Women)

Priority: Employability Support for Persons with Disabilities

Government has signed a new agreement called the Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities, which will replace the Employability Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities. This new agreement allows the province to tailor programs to the needs of Nova Scotians while ensuring additional accountability reporting requirements.

In 2004–2005, the Departments of Education, Community Services, and Health will develop a plan for the provision of services under the new agreement. It is estimated that roughly 2,000 Nova Scotians may take advantage of the program. (Education, Community Services, Health)

Priority: Enhancing Community Access to Schools

Communities face varied access, rental rates, and hours of availability for school facilities across the province. School boards will adjust their practices in 2004–2005 to comply with a new policy framework developed to standardize access and rate charges and to ensure that facilities are available for community and youth use for as many hours as possible. (Education)

Families and Communities—Measuring Our Performance

Measure: **Income Assistance Recipients Securing Employment (Community Services)**

Outcome: Strong families, children reaching their potential

Many people who receive income assistance are successful in obtaining work. Earnings from employment help reduce dependency on income assistance and make it easier for people to leave the income assistance program. This measure indicates the percentage of individuals receiving income assistance, who are eligible to participate in employment support programs, who have secured full-time or part-time work.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002–2003, 3,208 Nova Scotians receiving income assistance (31 per cent) secured full- or part-time employment (2001–2002, 3,352, or 34 per cent). The decline from last year is due to a reduction in income assistance caseloads (9,000 cases over the last four years) and a higher proportion of remaining clients having multiple barriers to employment due to family circumstance, disability, or education/training requirements. Our target for 2004–2005 is 39 per cent or a 5 per cent increase over the 2001–2002 base year of 34 per cent.

Measure: **Income Assistance Recipients Participating in Approved Educational Programs (Community Services)**

Outcome: Strong families, children reaching their potential

Many income assistance recipients are developing skills and personal potential to help them prepare for work and participate in their communities. This measure indicates the percentage of income assistance recipients participating in approved educational programs out of those eligible to participate.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002–2003, 43 per cent of eligible income assistance recipients (2001–2002, 43 per cent) participated in approved educational and skills training programs. The target for 2004–2005 is to maintain participation at 2001-2002 levels of eligible income assistance recipients.

Measure: **Children Living in Low-Income Households (Community Services)**

Outcome: Strong families, children reaching their potential

Statistics Canada calculates the income level at which a family may experience hardship because a greater portion of its income must be spent on the basic necessities. This is referred to as the Low-income Cutoff (LICO), and this measure uses LICOs after taxes–based data.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2001, 13.2 per cent of children lived in low-income households in Nova Scotia (2000, 11.4 per cent; 1999, 11.3 per cent). The objective is to lower this percentage.

Measure: **Overall Crime Rate (Justice)**

Outcome: Safe communities

The crime rate is a key indicator of social and economic well-being within a society. It indicates how many criminal incidents have been reported to the police for violent, property, drug, and other offences, excluding Criminal Code traffic offences. The number is standardized per 100,000 of the population so we can compare the rates across communities.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2001, there were 7,637 criminal incidents per 100,000 people—a rate that is lower than the national figure of 7,747 criminal incidents per 100,000. Maintaining Nova Scotia's crime rate below the national average is our target for the future.

Measure: **Highway Injuries/Casualty Rate (Transportation and Public Works)**

Outcome: Safe communities

This is a measure of the number of fatalities and injuries per 10,000 motor vehicles registered. The casualty rate is affected by a number of factors, including driver behaviour, vehicle condition, enforcement, education, and engineering. We use the casualty rate as an indicator of whether and how well government's programs are contributing to improved highway safety.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2002, the casualty rate per 10,000 motor vehicles registered in Nova Scotia was 102.81 (2001, 109.39; 2000, 123.9). Nova Scotia's casualty rate is lower than the national rate of 123.7 for 2001, and 122.8 for 2000 (Note 1). Working with various groups, our aim is to continually decrease the casualty rate on Nova Scotia's highways.

Note 1: Transport Canada changed its reporting of "casualty rates per 10,000 motor vehicles" after 2001. The Department of Transportation and Public Works is investigating alternative measures that will allow national comparisons for future business plans.

5. The Environment

Changing weather conditions are a way of life for Nova Scotians, given the effect of our marine coastline. But the extreme weather conditions of 2003–2004 served to remind us of the importance of both protecting and respecting our environment.

The Government of Nova Scotia will continue in 2004–2005 to work for and with Nova Scotians to protect and sustain the environment—in our homes, in our communities, and in the world.

A significant amount of effort this year will go toward responding to the aftermath of Hurricane Juan. Many forests were severely damaged, and it will be important to reduce the risk of forest fires in the summer of 2004. As well, provincial recreational facilities and parks will need repairs.

Government will continue, in year three of the drinking water strategy, to make sure Nova Scotians have access to safe water supplies in our communities and to provide information to help private well owners manage the quality of water on their own properties.

Helping Nova Scotians choose energy sources wisely, with a view to energy efficiency, will also be a focus this year.

Government will continue to participate in national climate change discussions and will work toward reducing harmful air emissions from industrial sources and improving air quality across the province.

Government will also develop and implement standard food safety and quality systems in Nova Scotia as part of the Canada–Nova Scotia Implementation Agreement for the Agriculture Policy Framework. This will help Nova Scotians feel confident about the quality and safety of their food sources at a time when many jurisdictions are struggling with food safety challenges.

The Environment Priorities 2004–2005

Priority: Dealing With the Aftermath of Hurricane Juan

The Government of Nova Scotia will focus resources in 2004–2005 on dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Juan.

The Department of Natural Resources' forest fire management and integrated pest management activities will address the increased fire, pest, and disease risk from the hurricane-damaged forest stands, mainly in the central region of the province.

In addition, there will be substantial redevelopment efforts for three of the most heavily damaged provincial park properties: McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park, Porters Lake Provincial Park, and Cole Harbour Heritage Park. (Natural Resources)

Priority: Protecting Drinking Water Quality

Government will proceed with implementation of *A Drinking Water Strategy for Nova Scotia,* to protect and manage provincial water resources in 2004–2005.

Year three of the strategy's action plan focuses on

- establishing municipal drinking water supply protection and treatment plans
- meeting provincial standards for public drinking water supplies
- encouraging municipalities to optimize treatment plant operation and performance
- providing outreach information to private well owners (Environment and Labour)

Priority: Protecting Nova Scotia's Air Quality

In 2004–2005, the Government of Nova Scotia will develop a framework for managing air quality that focuses on "airsheds"—regions where ambient air quality is influenced by common emission sources.

Regional and local airshed management plans will be developed to address

- air quality standards and objectives
- assessment of regional or local air quality
- consideration of local air quality concerns
- improved monitoring and continuous improvement

This initiative will be supported by ongoing work with large industrial emitters to assess and monitor the transport and deposition of air pollutants from major sources within the province. (Environment and Labour)

Priority: Climate Change Work

The Government of Nova Scotia will participate in the development of a national implementation plan of the Kyoto Protocol. The goal is to reach emission-reduction objectives without placing an unreasonable burden on any one region.

Government will

- participate as chairs and co-chairs in the federal, provincial, and territorial discussions on building a national climate change approach
- finalize a bilateral agreement on climate change with the federal government in 2004–2005
- update Nova Scotia's Climate Change Action Plan to support the national climate change approach

The Government of Canada has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 240 megatonnes by 2012. Reaching this target will require significant effort from industry, governments, and citizens. (Energy)

Priority: Promoting food and consumer safety

The Government of Nova Scotia will work with federal partners and the agriculture industry in 2004–2005 to develop and implement standard food safety and quality systems throughout the agri-food continuum. This is part of the Canada–Nova Scotia Implementation Agreement for the Agriculture Policy Framework.

Government will also proceed to finalize new health legislation to enhance and consolidate existing food safety legislation. New food inspection regulations will be proposed with the proclamation of the new Health Protection Act. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

Priority: Acquiring and Protecting Land

Government will continue to add to the provincially owned land base by acquiring land with significant recreational or ecological values, or land that supports government programs and initiatives, such as coastal properties, private holdings surrounded by wilderness areas, and wetlands.

Government will partner with non-government organizations, such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, to obtain land valued by Nova Scotians.

Government will protect more coastal lands and other natural areas from development. Two new wilderness areas and five nature reserves will be designated in 2004–2005. Private land stewardship partnerships will be explored.

Government will also acquire lands to enhance the value of the existing Crown land base and meet outstanding legal obligations and operational requirements. (Environment and Labour, Natural Resources)

Priority: Forest Strategy Implementation

Forest Strategy priorities for 2004–2005 include ensuring implementation of changes to the Registration and Statistical Returns Regulations and the Forest Sustainability Regulations, which took effect in January 2004.

These regulations allow the Department of Natural Resources to collect information on wood harvesting and to ensure that the level of harvesting in the province is sustainable by requiring that silviculture be carried out in proportion to the amount of wood harvested.

The Code of Forest Practice framework document of principles will be finalized in 2004–2005, and code guidebooks will be prepared. The framework document will provide the principles for implementing sustainable forest management in order to conserve and/or maintain forest

biodiversity, while enabling the sustainable utilization of forest resources on Crown and private forest lands in Nova Scotia. The guidebooks will provide the specific detail required to meet the code principles.

Government will prepare the information and data needed to produce a State of Forests report, scheduled for release in 2005–2006. The report will include results of the provincial wood supply analysis, and consolidate information and data on the province's forest resource. The purpose is to provide the public with a better understanding of conditions, characteristics, usage, and trends related to this resource. (Natural Resources)

Priority: Educating Nova Scotians on Energy Choices

The Government of Nova Scotia will implement a multi-year public education plan in 2004–2005 to give Nova Scotians practical, reliable information about the energy choices available and the economic and environmental consequences of energy development and use.

The campaign will include direct mail, advertising, website development, promotional campaigns, community outreach, and video and publication distribution. Nova Scotians will be able to make well-informed choices about the energy they use. (Energy)

Priority: Environmental Farm Plans

In 2004–2005, government will work with the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to continue the accelerated Environmental Farm Program under the Canada–Nova Scotia Implementation Agreement for the Agriculture Policy Framework. Some 20 per cent of registered farms are expected to have completed EFPs in 2004–2005.

This program builds on scientific research, innovative technology, and adoption of best practices to achieve environmental targets for agricultural soils, water, air, and bio-diversity. Cost-shared assistance to farmers is available for assessment of various environmental factors including nutrient, manure, and on-farm water management. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

Priority: Sydney Tar Ponds Cleanup

The Government of Nova Scotia will engage the Government of Canada in discussions regarding a new cost-sharing agreement for the actual clean-up phase of the tar ponds and coke ovens site.

In the event that agreement is reached with the Government of Canada on a new cost sharing arrangement, steps will be taken by the Government of Nova Scotia to obtain necessary environmental approvals and to begin the implementation of the cleanup on behalf of the two governments. If agreement is not reached with the Government of Canada on a new cost

sharing arrangement, the Government of Nova Scotia will take steps to begin the cleanup of provincially owned properties in the area of the tar ponds and coke ovens site.

The Sydney Tar Ponds agency will also monitor current projects that are part of the existing cost-sharing agreements, to ensure they are implemented in a timely manner in keeping with agreed-upon schedules and budgets. (Sydney Tar Ponds Agency)

Priority: Environmental Monitoring Plan for Aquaculture

In 2004–2005, government will continue implementation of the Environmental Monitoring Plan, developed in conjunction with the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia.

The Environmental Monitoring Plan is an environmental management tool that establishes baseline data and a monitoring system for tracking effects on the environment from aquaculture activities. It is anticipated that 25 to 30 aquaculture sites will be assessed in 2004–05.

The Government of Nova Scotia will also pursue opportunities to stimulate growth in the aquaculture sector in 2004–2005, including working with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to improve efficiencies in processing aquaculture site applications. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

Priority: Road Salt Management Strategy

Government will implement a comprehensive Salt Management Plan to reduce the impact of road salt on the environment and achieve cost efficiencies, without compromising roadway safety.

The plan takes into consideration all activities potentially resulting in the release of road salts into the environment, such as storage and handling, application of salts on roads, and disposal of snow containing road salts. It includes best management practices related to these activities and establishes procedures to monitor and report on progress accomplished.

A review will take place after five years to consider improvements to management practices and to determine if other steps are needed to further prevent or reduce negative impacts of road salts on the environment.

This plan will ensure Nova Scotia meets or exceeds the Code of Practice for the Environmental Management of Road Salts, established by Environment Canada in 2003. (Transportation and Public Works)

Environment—Measuring Our Performance

Measure: **Drinking Water Quality (Environment and Labour)**

Outcome: Healthy environment

This measure tracks the proportion of the population, served by municipal water supplies, that receives water meeting health-based criteria for bacteriological quality, as stated in the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*.

Performance Highlights and Targets

More than half of Nova Scotians (54 per cent) are served by municipal water supplies. In 2002, 96.5 per cent of this group (2001, 96.5 per cent) received water that met the criteria for bacteriological quality stated in the guidelines. The ongoing goal is to maximize the percentage of the population served by municipal water supplies that meet these criteria.

Measure: **Sulphur Dioxide Emissions (Environment and Labour)**

Outcome: Healthy environment

Sulphur dioxide (SO2) is a prevalent and harmful air contaminant. The quantity of SO2 emitted is considered a major determining factor for clean air.

Performance Highlights and Targets

The 1995 Air Quality Regulations establish a provincial annual sulphur dioxide emission cap of 189,000 tonnes. We plan to reduce the SO2 emission cap by 25 per cent, to 142,000 tonnes per year, by 2005. In 2002, 154,000 tonnes of SO2 were emitted by large- to medium-sized industries in the province, down from 164,000 in 2001 and 170,000 tonnes in 2000, our base year measure.

Measure: **Solid Waste Diversion (Environment and Labour)**

Outcome: Healthy environment

Community participation in environmental management is an important factor in achieving a healthy environment. This measure tracks the number of solid waste regions and their populations that are achieving a diversion rate of 50 per cent or more. There are seven solid waste regions in the province.

Performance Highlights and Targets

Nova Scotia has set some of the most progressive waste reduction targets in Canada. As of 2002–2003, two of seven regions reached a diversion rate of 50 per cent (49 per cent of the population). This compares to one of seven regions in 2001–2002 (39 per cent of the population). We are working to achieve a 50 per cent diversion rate in all seven solid waste regions by 2004–2005.

Measure: **Environmental Farm Plans (Agriculture and Fisheries)**

Outcome: Sustainable environment

The number of farmers with environmental farm plans in place is expressed as a percentage of all registered farmers under the Nova Scotia Farm Registration Act. Increasing the number of farms with environmental farm plans will result in conservation and sustainable development of soil, water, air, and bio-diversity resources.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2000–2001, 4 per cent of farmers had environmental farm plans in place. Our target is 20 per cent by 2004–2005. Environment is one of the five pillars within the new Canada–Nova Implementation Agreement for the Agricultural Policy Framework.

Measure: **Long-range Management Frameworks – Crown Land (Natural Resources)**

Outcome: Sustainable environment

Long-range management frameworks (LRMFs) are prepared to ensure effective management of Crown land. The frameworks are ecologically based land-use planning documents that will reflect the goals and values for each eco-district. This is a measure of our progress in establishing the frameworks.

Performance Highlights and Targets

No long-range management frameworks are currently in place for the province's 39 eco-districts. One LRMF is expected to be in place by the end of 2004–2005. The original target was to have up to 50 per cent of Crown land covered by long-range management frameworks by 2004–2005. However, the time required to prepare LRMF is much greater than originally anticipated. Targets will be re-examined during 2004–2005.

Measure: **Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Plans (Natural Resources)**

Outcome: Sustainable environment

The province is committed to the conservation and protection of species at risk. This is a measure of the percentage of endangered species with recovery plans in place on time. Under the Endangered Species Act, recovery plans are to be completed within a year of a species being listed as endangered and within two years of a species being listed as threatened.

Performance Highlights and Targets

The Endangered Species Act was enacted in 1999. As of March 31, 2003, there were 15 species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Recovery plans were actually required, or were completed before being required, for 12 species at this time. Of these 12 species, 11 had plans in place and a draft plan had been prepared for the other species. Our target is to continue to have recovery plans completed and in place according to the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

Measure: **Silviculture - Private and Industrial Lands (Natural Resources)**

Outcome: Sustainable environment

Government monitors wood harvesting through a Registry of Wood Buyers. Regulations require a wood buyer to conduct silviculture activity in proportion to the harvest on private and industrial land. Meeting required silviculture levels ensures the long-term sustainability of the wood supply. This measure tells us the level of silviculture activity being carried out, compared to the amount required to balance forest harvesting on private and industrial land.

Performance Highlights and Targets

Registered buyers met or exceeded 100 per cent of their obligations for carrying out silviculture in 2001 and 2002. Our target is to maintain or exceed 100 per cent compliance in 2004–2005.

6. Government Services

The Government of Nova Scotia will continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government programs and services in 2004–2005.

Maintaining a strong public service is a priority for the government. The quality, reliability, and cost-efficiency of programs and services are directly related to the skills and dedication of the employees who plan and deliver them. The government must also prepare for more employee retirements in years to come, due to an aging workforce.

The government will develop a comprehensive Human Resources Strategy in 2004–2005 that will respond to some of the current HR challenges. This will include specific programs and policies to ensure a safe and supportive workplace, a focus on employee wellness, and opportunities for training and development, education, and promotion.

The government will further strengthen planning, budgeting, evaluation, and accountability processes in 2004–2005. These systems help define programs and services, identify resource needs, and ensure that progress is reported. Treasury and Policy Board will do some specific work with third-party agencies to strengthen reporting guidelines this year.

The government will also make improvements to the systems used to collect and manage government information. Payroll and human resource management systems will be upgraded, and projects will be launched to develop new data systems and information management policies.

Government departments will continue ongoing work to improve the quality of services to Nova Scotians. Electronic service delivery improvements will be made, and the Department of Community Services will work to improve the quality of service to approximately 165,000 clients.

Government Services Priorities 2004–2005

Priority: Corporate Human Resources Strategy

The Government of Nova Scotia will complete a Corporate Human Resources Strategy in 2004–2005 to ensure that programs and services for Nova Scotians are guided by qualified and motivated staff, now and in future.

The government is facing the same human resource challenges as other public- and private-sector employers due to the general aging of the population. Government employees will be retiring in larger numbers, and it is also becoming more difficult to recruit and retain workers, particularly in management and specific fields where there is competition from other employers.

The HR strategy will take a comprehensive approach to addressing these challenges and meeting the needs of government employees. This will include specific programs and policies to ensure a safe and supportive workplace, a focus on employee wellness, training and educational opportunities, and promotion of a culture of client service.

The succession management component is expected to start in 2004–2005 with measures to help current employees prepare for key management positions. There will also be specific work on recruitment and retention, and continuous learning.

The HR strategy will incorporate results of the 2004 employee survey along with other employee consultations. (Public Service Commission)

Priority: 2004 Employee Survey

The government will analyse and release the results of the first comprehensive survey of Nova Scotia government employees, conducted in February 2004. The survey targeted all permanent government employees, including civil servants, highway workers, and correctional workers. Questions covered topics such as communications, employee involvement, leadership, and compensation.

The government will analyse the data to get a clearer picture of the work environment and the needs of employees. The Public Service Commission and departments will use the information to create and tailor policies and programs for employees. (Public Service Commission)

Priority: Expanding E-Government Services

The government will continue to expand and promote electronic government services for Nova Scotians in 2004–2005, to make service to the consumer more convenient and consistent.

Departments will evaluate opportunities for e-government services, such as electronic approval and payment systems. Projects slated for implementation in 2004–2005 include the Geo Portal, personalized vehicle plates, and the lien check service for those purchasing personal property such as automobiles.

New initiatives with other levels of government will also improve access and convenience of the Nova Scotia Business Registry in 2004–2005.

The government is also participating in the Nova Scotia e-Government Provincial Municipal Joint Venture Group, formed three years ago to work toward seamless e-government. Members include Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, several municipalities, the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, and the Association of Municipal Administrators.

A functional and effective website has been piloted in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality to assist citizens, businesses, and councillors in municipalities to develop their own websites. This will be offered for other municipalities to use in 2004–2005. (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

Priority: Improving Client Service Delivery

The Department of Community Services provides services to approximately 165,000 Nova Scotians each year, from many different walks of life, in many different circumstances. In 2004–2005 the department will begin a coordinated effort to improve client service delivery.

The goal is to ensure that Nova Scotians have timely access to information and staff, and that employees have the information, tools, and training they need to serve their clients. The department will foster open relationships with service providers to promote efficient and effective service delivery.

The project will include

- service protocols covering office hours and telephone and messaging standards
- more information for clients using programs and services
- an Integrated Case Management system to give staff access to appropriate case information to support timely and informed decisions (Community Services)

Priority: Information Management Framework

Government information is a critical strategic resource that must be managed equally as well as human and financial resources. The government will work to improve governance structure, policies, standards, and best practices in 2004–2005.

A corporate Information Management Strategy and Framework will be developed for Nova Scotia government-held information. This will ensure that information held by the Crown is managed by all employees as a strategic resource, integral to the conduct of government business, with appropriate protections and quality assurance. (Office of Economic Development)

Priority: Data Centre Services Project

The government will launch a three-year project to examine all areas of government information technology operations. This is intended to identify areas in which to improve efficiency, reduce cost, and meet the changing demands for technology services in the public sector.

This project will result in a long-term contract or contracts for data centre services, slated for full implementation in early 2007. The current data centre processing contract, provided by an outside party, will remain in place until that time. (Office of Economic Development; Transportation and Public Works)

Priority: Fair, Accessible Insurance

The government will examine and report on the use of gender as a factor in auto insurance risk classification as well as in relation to rates and availability of fire, other property, and liability insurance for homeowners, tenants, non-profit organizations, and small businesses.

The government will review any recommendations for changes to the property and liability insurance market with a view to providing fairness for Nova Scotian businesses and consumers.

Recommendations on the continued use of gender in auto insurance risk classification systems will be analysed for possible changes to the regulations. (Environment and Labour)

Priority: SAP Program

Technology and information management systems across government and the public sector will improve in 2004–2005 with the ongoing implementation of SAP systems.

The government will complete the E-Merge project to improve human resources and payroll systems and processes in school boards and provincial government departments. This is a major upgrade in system infrastructure and will give managers access to more HR and payroll information.

Other SAP projects under development include

- a municipal sector strategy, including tax and water systems
- a plan for the health sector and district health authorities
- implementation of portals in support of e-government

The government will also continue to support the overall SAP program, including evaluation frameworks, program reviews, project office support, and further development of the SAP program governance structure. (Office of Economic Development; Finance; Health; Education; Public Service Commission)

Priority: Improving Third-Party Entity Accountability

The government will further strengthen planning, budgeting, evaluation, and accountability processes in 2004–2005, focusing in particular on third-party entities. These organizations collectively spend more than $2.5 billion in taxpayers' funds each year.

Treasury and Policy Board will work with third-party entities to strengthen financial reporting guidelines as needed. The government will also introduce legislation to allow the dismissal of chief executive officers who do not meet reporting requirements.

The government will plan and monitor value-for-money assessments to ensure effective use of public funds and enhanced accountability by third-party entities.

The government will also begin to implement Nova Scotia Community Accounts—a statistical infrastructure of census, taxation, and administrative data sets—which will support evidence-based decision making and program planning for Nova Scotia's Community Development Initiative and Primary Health Care Renewal. (Finance; Treasury and Policy Board)

Priority: User Fee Policy

The government will continue the second year of a project to develop a policy for the levying of user fees by government departments for the purpose of consistency, fairness, and equity.

A database of department user fees will be developed, and research on best practices for user fee policy and administration will be completed. (Treasury and Policy Board)

Priority: Improving Government Services to African Nova Scotians

The government created the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs in late 2003 to provide a government focus for matters pertaining to the African Nova Scotians.

The office will be working in 2004–2005 with African Nova Scotian communities and government departments, agencies, and organizations to coordinate African Nova Scotian initiatives and develop strategies to improve government services to the African Nova Scotian community. (ANSA Office)

Government Services—Measuring Our Performance

Measure: **Business Plans and Accountability Reports (Treasury and Policy Board)**

Outcome: Open and accountable government

Business plans provide a benchmark against which results can be assessed. Accountability reports summarize accomplishments and performance related to the priorities and targets set out in the annual business plans. Departments, selected public service entities, and Crown corporations are required to submit annual business plans and accountability reports to Treasury and Policy Board and publish them and/or post them on their websites. This measure indicates the percentage of government departments, public service votes, and Crown corporations submitting and publishing business plans and accountability reports each fiscal year.

Performance Highlights and Targets

Business plans for 2003–2004 for all departments, Crown corporations, and required public service entities were submitted to Treasury and Policy Board and published in the 2003–2004 Government Business Plan document. All departments and many Crown corporations and public service entities also post their business plans on their websites.

For 2002–2003 accountability reports, all required government entities submitted accountability reports to Treasury and Policy Board, and all but two have posted their accountability reports to their websites. We are working toward 100 per cent web access for business plans and accountability reports.

Measure: **Customer Satisfaction (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)**

Outcome: Accessible government

Measuring the expectations and experiences of the people using government services provides valuable information about how to improve the delivery and quality of these services. This measure focuses on services offered by Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

Performance Highlights and Targets

In 2001–2002, the overall customer satisfaction with the services of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations was 89 per cent. In 2002–2003, overall customer satisfaction was 92 per cent. Our target is a 90 per cent satisfaction rate.

Appendix A - Website Locations for Business Plans

The Provincial Finance Act requires the Government of Nova Scotia to publish an annual Government Business Plan. By policy, government also requires departments, agencies, and Crown Corporations in the consolidated financial statements to produce business plans.

Both the Government Business Plan and the Crown Corporation Business Plans are available to the public in hard copy on Budget Day or can be downloaded from the Government of Nova Scotia website: www.gov.ns.ca.

Complete business plans for departments and public service vote entities are published on-line. Department and public service entity business plans can be found through their specific websites. Website addresses for each entity are listed below.

Business Plan URLs 2004-2005

Department	URL
Agriculture and Fisheries	http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsaf/department/business_plans/
Community Services	http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/
Education	http://ednet.ns.ca/index.php?sid=505598311&t=sub_pages&cat=70
Energy	www.gov.ns.ca/energy
Environment and Labour	http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pubs/
Finance	http://gov.ns.ca/finance/publish
Health	http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/downloads/2004-2005
Justice	http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/publications/publications.htm
Natural Resources	http://www.gov.ns.ca/businessplan/BP2004/NRBP0405.PDF
Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations	http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/about/businessplan.asp
Tourism, Culture and Heritage	http://www.gov.ns.ca/dtc/pubs/Business_Plan_2004.pdf
Transportation and Public Works	http://www.gov.ns.ca/tran/publications/publication.asp

Public Service Entity	URL
Aboriginal Affairs	http://www.gov.ns.ca/abor/content/busplan.asp
Communications Nova Scotia	http://www.gov.ns.ca/cmns/
Emergency Measures Organization	www.gov.ns.ca/emo
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Review Office	http://www.gov.ns.ca/foiro/content/Publications.htm#Annual%20Reports
Human Rights Commission	http://www.gov.ns.ca/humanrights/publications/default.htm
Intergovernmental Affairs	http://www.gov.ns.ca/iga/publications.htm
Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board	www.nsuarb.ca (Under construction)
Office of Economic Development	http://www.gov.ns.ca/econ/pubs/businessplan/200405/
Office of Health Promotion	http://www.gov.ns.ca/src/publications/index.htm
Office of the Ombudsman	http://www.gov.ns.ca/ombu/
Public Prosecution Service	http://www.gov.ns.ca/pps/
Public Service Commission	http://gov.ns.ca/psc/busplan/busplan.pdf
Status of Women, Advisory Council	http://www.gov.ns.ca/staw/pubs2004_05/2004_05busplan.pdf
Sydney Tar Ponds Agency	www.gov.ns.ca/stpa
Treasury and Policy Board	http://www.gov.ns.ca/tpb/publications.htm
Voluntary Planning	www.gov.ns.ca/vp